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A HISTORY OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE

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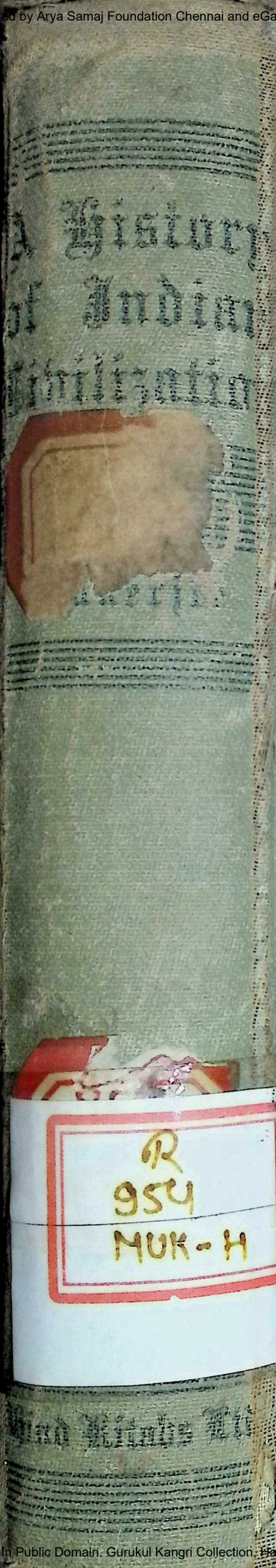

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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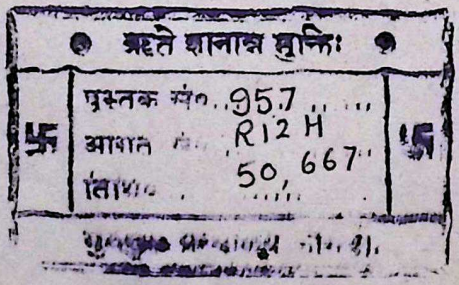
THE INDIAN WORKING CLASS
PLANNING THE COUNTRY-SIDE
THE LAND PROBLEMS OF INDIA
THE RURAL ECONOMY OF INDIA
BORDERLANDS OF ECONOMICS
THEORY AND ART OF MYSTICISM
REGIONAL SOCIOLOGY
FOOD PLANNING FOR FOUR HUNDRED MILLIONS
MAN AND HIS HABITATION
MIGRANT ASIA
THE INSTITUTIONAL THEORY OF ECONOMICS
THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF POPULATION
THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF VALUES
THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF ART
THE DYNAMICS OF MORALS
THE SYMBOLIC LIFE OF MAN
THE LORD OF THE AUTUMN MOONS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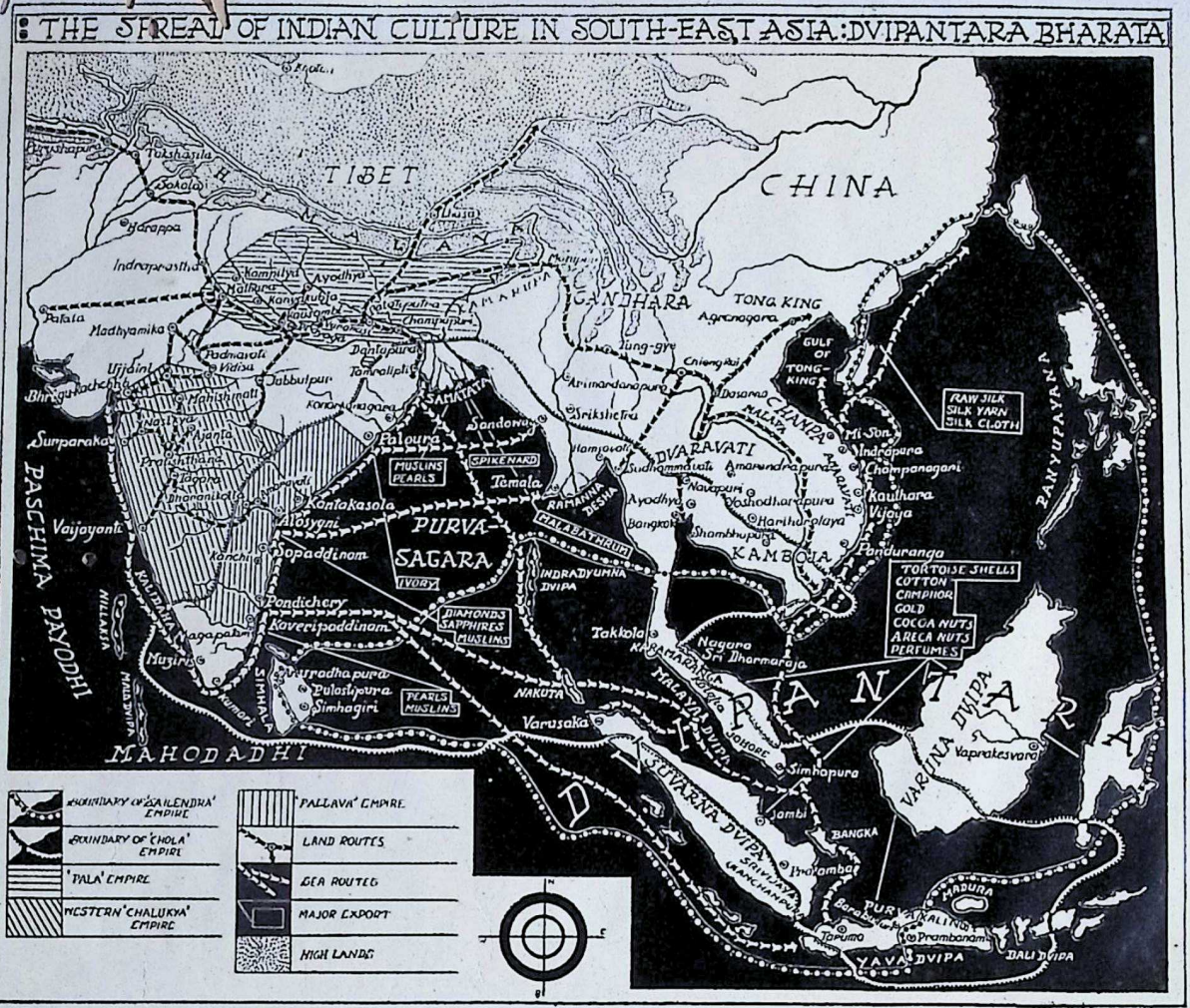

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A HISTORY OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

VOLUME I

ANCIENT AND CLASSICAL TRADITIONS

BY

RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE

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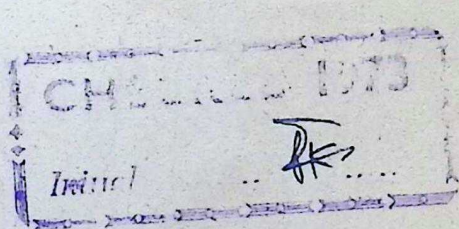
University of Lucknow

LUCKNOW



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PREFACE

THE aim of this work is to survey the general course of Indian civilization, one of the oldest civilizations in the chequered history of Man. While not dealing in detail with the isolated facts and events of political history and the controversies of chronology, it is concerned more directly with the larger movements of history and thought, and the processes of social evolution. These it aims to present by a proper sociological method, a multicultural approach interpreting them in the light of the various myths, religions and art-patterns as they appear from age to age. There runs however through this diversity a principle of unity—a fundamental unity of land, dharma and culture after a universal pattern of belief and faith, and conforming to a metaphysical frame of social order. The work seeks to offer a synoptic and critical examination of the factors and forces that have moulded India's culture, institutions and ways of living, and created that stability and synthesis which mark out her civilization. It endeavours to trace the unifying thread that links together the diverse phases of India's history: the growth of meta-historical norms of order, balance and continuity, applicable to both the cosmic and social spheres, and embodied in art, ethos and worship that have preserved society against trouble and disintegration and conferred on it the integral harmony and universality derived from pure metaphysics.

Indeed the poise and tempo of India's civilization cannot be properly understood without reference to Religion and Scholasticism that are inseparably fused with the way of life, with the moral code and the social scheme. India's history is not like a chariot driven along the narrow and rugged paths of aggression and violence by the twin powers of Economics and Politics. It is rather the larger car of Jagannātha progressing along the broad highway of humanity toward a cosmic destiny, a synthesis of man's myths, values and aspirations. The meaning of India's history is to be found in certain cultural conformities and norms derived from universal principles in pure scholastic mode that pervade and

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cumulatively mould her Social Institutions and Hierarchial Relations, Justice, Law and Polity. These metaphysical and moral values that indeed explain the distinctiveness and vitality of India's culture through the ages are in this volume expounded in their historical context and social implications.

The quality of India's civilization rests entirely on her basic humanist premises of the majesty and dignity of the Real, Universal or Common Man, forming the essence of her ancient Rig-Vedic teaching, and the Rig-Vedic and Buddhistic conception of Ṛta or Dharma—the primordial law sustaining the cosmic and social order as well as the specific conduct of individuals. The notion of Dharma defines not merely the whole order of the cosmos in its infinite levels and cycles, but also fixes the specific goals and vocations of individual life. With its corollary, the belief that no human gift or capacity should be exercised for its own sake alone, but be dedicated as sacrificial offerings (mahāyajña) for the continuity of life and the universe, this metaphysical concept has dominated Indian thought since the earliest times. It has defied the attempts of successive heterodox and agnostic schools to expel it, and indeed constitutes the essential basis of Indian morality, personal and social, through the ages and among all peoples of India.

Western civilization has on the whole failed to bridge the gulf between the social order and the moral perfection of the individual, and Western thought often, as a consequence, has oscillated between utopianism and revolution. India's greatest single contribution to forming the imagination, and therefore the moral tradition of Asia has been the idea of compassion (karuṇā) or sharing (muditā) which arises directly from her myth of the Homo Universus and the identification of the self with the most extensive abstract Community. Morally speaking, the stress of communion and solidarity as the key-note of individual and social culture mitigates the inequalities of wealth and power, makes the social distance that is inevitable in a land of diverse peoples, cultures and stages of evolution tolerable, and builds up an integrated community on the basis of tolerance, forbearance and contentment (santoṣa) with the limited values of life. Politically and historically speaking, this helps towards the social assimilation of different ethnic groups on the one hand, and the four-fold organic and spiritual ordering of society (varṇa), where there is a downward movement of power or privilege and character or knowledge, on

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the other. Individual struggle and competition and class strife are mitigated through the metaphysical myth of transmigration which is linked up with the moral law of the fruition of good and evil deeds in a long chain of births regulating various levels of life. Just as the myths of immortality, metempsychosis and Karma and the cycles of saṃsāra establish the long-range balance of fortunes and misfortunes through successive incarnations in individual life, so the myths of the cycle of human perfection and degeneration through the Four Ages and of the Divine Incarnation (avatāra), recurrent in macrocosmic history, engender fortitude in adversity and charity in prosperity in collective life. These no doubt have been stabilising factors in Indian history.

The broad course of Indian civilization is no doubt fashioned and directed by the various metaphysical doctrines and myths of humanism. These have been fruitful growths in the Indian soil, and, unlike the Hebraic, Greek and Christian myths of the West, are still very much alive today. Man's moral demands are here adapted to metaphysics or philosophy, rather than the other way about. The demands of reason, intuition and social feelings indeed converge in a single affirmation of the identity between self and not-self.

Each civilization has its own character and individuality. A student of a historical civilization has to study it in a thoroughly objective manner, and understand the myths, values and experiences it embodies in the light of the insistent social problems it faced and the conditions available for their solution in the past. In India the stress on the metaphysical and mystical side of culture was associated with a relative undervaluation of political power and ambition, although there had been engendered a strong sense of cultural mission and responsibility from the humanitarian adventure of Emperor Asoka across the Himalayas to the establishment of the maritime Chola Empire in Ceylon, Malaya and Indonesia. This, indeed, constitutes the paradox of Indian civilization which was seen to extend its frontiers in South-East Asia through its broad humanisms and later forms of her evangelising Buddhism even in the century when the principal cities and centres of culture of Northern India were being ruthlessly ransacked and overrun by fanatical invaders.

It is noteworthy that both Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni and Timur after their capture and destruction of the Indian cities

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took care to protect and carry away their celebrated masons and other craftsmen to Samarqand. The medieval architecture of Samarqand as well as of Ghazni and Kabul bears ample testimony to the skill and craftsmanship of the Indian masons and stonecutters, whom Amir Khusrau proclaimed as superior to their fellow craftsmen of the whole Muslim world. From the time of the Mauryas right up to the 18th century India retained her pre-eminence as the agricultural mother of Asia and the industrial workshop of the world. Such supremacy maintained through millennia was the outcome of her rich agricultural as well as mineral resources such as silver, copper, lead, zinc, iron and mercury, the development of her science, technology, textile, chemical and metallurgical industries and shipping and the renowned skill of her workmen. It made the country the sink of the world's precious metals and contributed to a remarkable development of the fine arts and luxury industries through the centuries. Indian religion, literature and culture largely followed trade across the caravan routes of Central Asia and China and the sea-routes in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea—the Pūrva-sāgara and Paścima-payodhi. On the whole, however, neither the lure of trade nor political ambition but irrepressible humanist, religious and artistic movements underlie the expansion of the cultural empire of India. In the Buddhist middle ages of Asia this cultural ascendancy was symbolised in the grand Indian Mahāyānic myth of Trailokya-vijaya or the spiritual conquest of the earth, heaven and nether world.

The great art and literature of India focus various types of humanist myths, doctrines and ethos and produce new social universalisms for people and culture. This is especially manifest in the eras of renaissance and empire-building. They have achieved assimilation into a unified social system of diverse peoples and races, myths and faiths through what Toynbee calls 'social mimesis', rather than through the coercive processes of militarism, nationalism or racialism. Travelling across geographical boundaries they have left their indelible impress upon the culture of Middle and South-east Asia, of half of mankind belonging to the East. It is her prolific art and literature that led to the spread of her philosphical, religious and cultural movements both within India and abroad to the distant Hindu colonies from the Tarim to the Mekong basin: two widely separated zones in North

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and East, where the mystical and metaphysical culture of India and the practical and humanist culture of her great and ancient neighbour, China, came together in a fruitful and fateful meeting so big with consequences to Asian history.

During the storms and stresses of political changes it is her lofty scripture, sculpture and poetry and her traditional educational system that kept alive the spirit of the people, and their devotion to the ancient myths, values and traditions. The poise and resilence of Indian civilization are abundantly manifest in the many peaks of achievement recorded in diverse fields of man's adventure. These are conspicuously seen in Āruṇi, Yājñavalkya, Buddha, Mahāvīra, Gorakhnāth and Chaitanya in the field of religion; Kapila, Kaṇāda, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva in the field of philosophy; the Bhagavad-Gītā, the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, the Yogavāsiṣṭha, the Śrīmad Bhāgavata and the Rāmacarita Mānasa as religious classics; Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti and Jayadeva in the realm of poetry; Caraka, Suśruta, Āryabhaṭṭa, Brahmagupta, Varāhamihira and Bhāskara in the realm of the positive sciences; Sanci, Sārnāth, Mathura, Ellora, Elephanta, Anurādhapura and Borobudur in the realm of sculpture; Ajanta, Sigiriya and Bamiyan in the realm of painting; Khajuraho, Bhuvaneśvara, Tanjore, Halebid, Prambanam and Angkor-Vat in the realm of temple architecture; the monolithic pillars of Asoka, the iron pillar of Candra and the silks, muslins and ivories in craftmanship; and, finally, Chandragupta, Asoka, Akbar, Sivaji, Krishna Raya and Ranjit Singh as empire-builders.

A remarkable feature of India's history is that it represents throughout an uninterrupted growth. Unlike Europe, India has not suffered from any long cultural eclipses or dark periods. She has seen many fruitful renaissances and fresh cultural movements, often reacting against political turmoils and crises. Today after five millennia of her history she is again passing through another fateful renaissance. It is because she is ancient and yet active that we can best appreciate in her history both the successes and failures of the past for guidance as to the present and the future in a process of historic continuity. India also has had so many contacts with foreign cultures of different types, pastoral-nomadic, sedentary-agricultural, military or maritime at different stages of her history, and her ways of responding to them have been so varied, that we can profitably study here the factors that underlie the rise and

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decay of new and mature civilized communities. Many a civilization has met with its doom or languished indefinitely as a result of unforeseen catastrophic contact with another civilization by losing the efficiency and potency of vital and cohesive myths, doctrines and ethos that provided the basis of its creative endeavours in history. We see in India's history that long-range or macrocosmic balance and rhythm of human mind and culture that provide the basis and the material for a true philosophy of history. The progress of people rests not on power politics nor on economic aggrandisement, nor again on techniques of world-wide propaganda but on their collective poise springing from a sense of the Universal evolving through the process of time and history so as to reinforce at once the concord and comradeship of One World and the freedom and initiative of the individual personality.

The work is divided into several parts under a common plan that weaves together the trends of social, religious, philosophical and artistic movements in the broad frame of the march of history. Myths of religion, symbols of art and key-norms of social institutions in which are enshrined the vital features of a cultural movement or epoch are selected as foci of socio-historical analysis, bringing to light the character and conscience of the people in different epochs. A special feature of the work is its illustrations of Indian art. Sculpture in India gives supreme expression to what is permanent and universal in man, his perennial vision of serenity, power, compassion and love with overtones of meaning brooding over his progress in the generations. It quietly and confidently directs his social destiny irrespective of the vicissitudes of politics. Thus the various archetypes, motifs and symbols of art which communicate great metaphysical myths, religious truths and moral norms, and record and consolidate momentous social and spiritual movements across the centuries have been especially drawn upon for purposes of historical interpretation and illustration. Art in India in its formative periods has not been, however, metaphysical, hieratic or literary. Its cultural and religious background must not be missed. But it is the creation of abiding forms and rhythms in various regions and phases and its fullness of sense-perception and enjoyment rather than its iconography and symbology that make it significant in the world history of art. These formal values that are usually lost sight of through the stress of classical literary sentiment, idealism or transcendentalism are

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defined and appraised for the various art specimens reproduced in this volume.

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"The time (that has parts) cooks all things,
In the Great Self, indeed;
But the Comprehensor of that (the impartite,
absolute Time)
in which time itself
Is cooked *he* knows the Vedas".

(*The Maitrī Upaniṣad*)

"In the universe-cauldron, filled with the boiling water of stupendous delusion, are being cooked all creatures by Time with the blazing sun as fire, the days and nights as fuel and the months and seasons as the churning ladle. Such are the tidings of the earth".

(*The Mahābhārata, Vanaparva*)

"Let us offer our worship to the Eternal, of infinite forms, of stability immeasurable, of vision unbounded, of knowledge absolute, with arms all-embracing, with names without number, the Eternal Witness of all Life, the Timeless Holder of all ages of time and history. Obeisance to Him."

(*Viṣṇu-Sahasra-nāma*).

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INTRODUCTION

THE INDIAN PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

History as Myths and Traditions in Action

History is the flowing, cumulative stream of myths and traditions. The chanting or recital of myths, tales and ballads during festivals marking the cycles of the seasons is the beginning of history, spurring a people to epoch-making adventures. All history is in a sense myth-making. Myths are by no means futile or fictitious as presumed by the nineteenth century historians, who in their turn formulated or tacitly supported the myths of the Individual, State, Nationality, Race, Power, and Progress in the background of European development. Myths poetically and pregnantly embody the traditions, values and aspirations of a people. These are conserved and transmitted by social memory and bind their present to the past in belief, thought and action. The "units of history" are simply myths and traditions in action, what Rickert called "value structures" through which universal values are evidenced in historical actuality—the broad and enduring historical constants that pervade the stable social arrangement and culture of a people, and underlie the recurrent patterns in their social life and development. The process of history is the march towards the realisation of the universal, cosmic myths, traditions and values of mankind, albeit manifest in the diversity of cultural patterns in different regions and epochs.

It is the myth-making function of history that underlies its dynamic force in moulding the social life, morality and culture of a people. "History is past politics." But, as Haizinga has well observed, "History is the intellectual form in which civilization renders account to itself of its past." History is much more than politics or the apotheosis of power. The waxing and waning of power in the struggle between peoples and nations touch only the fringe of history seen in a macro-cosmic perspective.

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The more comprehensively the scope and methods of approach are conceived, the more effectively does it recreate the entire culture through the records of past traditions, values and experience.

Historical explanation tends to exaggerate surface motivations and undervalue a people's unconscious motivations in human development. Myths integrate their conscious urges and thought habits with the unconscious urges and repressed complexes. These accordingly comprise a more satisfactory frame of reference for the understanding of their disguised as well as socially approved goals and standards that constitute the true motive forces in history. The dynamic power of myths and traditions rests indeed in history on the fact that these constitute a blend of unconscious, selfish and aggressive and conscious, altruistic and co-operative urges of group action and mass movement. In so far as the modern philosophy of history stresses man's reason, critical faculty and deliberate social policy it suffers from self-deception; as it stresses man's greed, predatoriness and unqualified materialistic motivations it shuts its eyes to the formative role of myths, traditions and values in moulding human nature and to the manifold goals and aspirations of social institutions, the prevalent ways of living and the standards of morality that constitute human civilization. In the older civilizations of India and China myths are multi-functional, covering almost every sector of society, and charged with the values and aspirations of whole cultural movements and epochs. These are assented to and pondered over by successive generations, and obtain new shades of meaning in each through fresh knowledge, experience and sensibility. Thus these are cumulative in the form of social traditions, institutions and values that outlast dynasties and empires and enter into the very fabric of history. More than the affairs of emperors, princes and nobles it is the great myths, traditions, and ethos and the philosophical, religious and social movements these generate and activate that explain the true histories of the Indian and Chinese peoples. No histories of India and China can be real which separate politics from the religion, ethos and broad trend of myths, values and traditions of each age.

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The Gestalt Approach to History

Human history is a total cumulative ensemble or gestalt in which the broadening and lengthening warp and woof of human facts and events on the one hand, and myths and traditions on the other are inextricably interwoven in the web of time. The gestalt approach to history as a cumulative, moving, forward-looking whole, with the attention focussed on the dynamism of myths, traditions and values into which the whole can be resolved or split up, makes possible the right understanding and interpretation of human affairs, of "things said and done in the past". Not all myths and traditions are dealt with by history, but only those that have functional significance in the interactive emergent pattern. Such are the "units of history" that have to be chosen or discovered and understood in their context with the present and the future. The reality of myths and traditions consists in their fashioning the cumulative sequence with its order, consistency and laws, which is history. The truth of history is the meaning of this inherent order and continuity of the march of Man amidst the fluctuating fortunes and ephemeral experiences of men, institutions and cultures.

The Philosophy of History as Sociology

Man in history is three-fold: Man the Mutable, Man the Eternal and Man the Deity. History rightly understood is not concerned simply with the growth and decay of peoples, objects and institutions, the careers and vicissitudes of man, finite creature as he is and ordained to perish with all his adventures and achievements. In Indian historiography, embodied in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, the classic sources of the country's mythology and tradition, the mutable man is called Nara. History is the inherent order and truth gleaned from the divergent, seemingly chaotic development of human adventures, values and experiences that outlive the transient existence of man. Man is eternal and universal, the inhabitant not of one country and age but of all countries and ages, the maker of enduring myths and traditions and the bearer of the ultimate values, ever projected towards the future. This is the human image which is ever present in the vicissitudes and fluctuating situations of history. In the ephemeral and confused pageant of

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history this Eternal and Universal Man is indeed the abiding presence, embodied in, but transcending the limited, fleeting images of mortal man belonging to a race, country, class or historical and cultural epoch. Historical events or sequences in the long, macro-cosmic rhythm show an order or reality which is true history—the eternal frame of man's immutability and universality. The Eternal Man is called Narottama in the Mahābhārata. Finally, there is Man the Deity which is the cosmic urge to advance, manifest in the glory and triumph as well as in the fall and anguish of man, the goal towards which the whole creation moves. This is the Nārāyana of the epic and the Purāṇas. The epic thus begins with the homage to the triple images of Man—Nara or Finite Man, Narottama or Eternal Man and Nārāyana or Deity, moving and being moved in the procession of history: "While adoring Nārāyana, Nara and Narottama and also the goddess of learning, Sarasvatī and Vyāsa, may one make victory issue therefrom." The deity, dharma and victory are inseparable in the Mahābhārata. Vyāsa is the prototype of the sage and chronicler, while Sarasvatī is the Spirit of Wisdom—the muse of the jayanāma or the Saga of victory. The saga records the ultimate triumph of righteousness over evil, each hero standing for a generic attribute of either goodness or wickedness, and culminates in the success of truth, justice and dharma that securely rest in Krishna-Nārāyana actively participating in the vicissitudes of mankind. The supreme lesson that the epic inculcates is that when finite man regains knowledge of his spiritual nativity, "recalling, recalling" the glories of the Divine Truth and Goodness of the past, and becomes united with that Real, Eternal Lord whence he comes, fortune, victory, welfare and morality are eternally assured for him (Bhagavad Gītā, XVIII 76-78).

In India the pattern of historical enquiry and understanding took the form of myths, traditions and episodes of heroes, patriots and saints—gāthā nārasamsi, jayanāma-itihāsa and purāṇa. The Indian historian, following the traditions of Indian historiography, must possess, in the words of the celebrated Kalhana the historian, "the divine perception of the poet resembling Prajāpati" for recreating the past and indicating the significance of past values and experiences for the present generation.

Modern studies of the behaviour of groups, communities and peoples are grounded on the techniques and methods of

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geography, psychology, anthropology, economics and sociology. All these sciences must integrate their methods and outlooks for understanding and interpreting social relations, traditions and events of the past. History is tending to become many-sided, multi-cultural—sociological in its content and methods.

The "frame of reference" of history, its classification into periods, its concepts and criteria of classification of social forms (family, clan, tribe, folk, nation, world-community), institutions (occupation, class, caste, technology, manners, morality, law), traditions (economic, political, intellectual, aesthetic, religious) and the pattern and ordering of values are provided by sociology that projects its insights and appraisals relating to the contemporary society meticulously into the past. History is applied social psychology and philosophy, sensitive to the particular qualities and patterns of each historical epoch and culture, and the processes of their genesis, growth and operation from age to age. It is therefore that Paul Barth envisaged the philosophy of history as sociology.

History cannot be simplified into a chapter of geography, economics or politics. The crucial material of history is represented by the manifold myths, values and traditions of men, which have to be identified and ordered from epoch to epoch, and for which historical explanations have to be adduced in order that the knowledge of the past offers the clue to the solution of present problems. For this the understanding of social myths, traditions and ethos from a long-time or macro-cosmic scale is indeed central or primary, as the stress of invasion, war and conquest and their effects on the fate of kingdoms and peoples one-sided or secondary. Even Napolean, the victor of a hundred battles, once remarked, "History is the only true psychology and the only true philosophy". This is all the more so in a sub-continent like India whose achievements in culture, philosophy and religious and artistic expression, having little or no reference to war and politics, profoundly influenced the society and way of living of half of Asia for well-nigh two thousand years. Myths and the cultural and moral traditions and frames of reference that moved men in past times towards some realisation in collective life certainly carry a greater and more subtle truth than many biographies, inscriptions and documents to which historians usually resort in their analysis of human events. The student

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of Indian civilization will do well for obtaining the clues to Indian history to attempt a right understanding and appreciation of the dominant role played by the great myths and traditions of India, alive with metaphysical value and social significance. Indian civilization has passed through various stages or cycles. Sometimes it has become static or moribund, but again it has experienced a new awakening or renaissance. This is due far less to invasion and conquest than to intellectual and religious ferment, impelling a reorientation of traditions and ethos and renewing the devotion of the people towards cherished goals and values. Thus the myths and traditions enter new highways in history.

Civilizations vary in the constructive and vitalising roles of their myths. Where the collective judgment, evaluation and memory of peoples are embodied in enduring myths, these afford quick and easy guidance for them in their manifold struggles and crises. The doctrines and dogmas of the elite cannot in all societies transform themselves into universal myths. They soon exhaust their force and give rise to fresh doctrines and dogmas that increase if not create a gulf between the elite and the rest of society. Thus social action tends to become fitful and haphazard, and the passing doctrines and dogmas themselves become disruptive. It is the rationalism of the European Renaissance and the Protestant Movement that corroded many ancient, pagan and Christian myths in the West, created a divorce between human and cosmic life and destiny, and undermined the Western man's security and poise. This is, no doubt, reflected in the European philosophy of history where myth-making is superseded by a feverish pre-occupation with a linear series of human events governed by the materialistic notions of Progress and Power, and the emphasis of biological, geographic, political, economic and psycho-analytic doctrines for explaining the so-called "scientific" history. The meta-historical consciousness of an abstract eternity and of time-less, recurrent macro-cosmic events has completely receded in the background in European thought ruled by an over-weening scientism or scepticism, though such physical sciences as astronomy, geology and palaeontology have reaffirmed the vision of limitless ages and countless universes.

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The Great Myths of India

It is the universal, abiding metaphysical character of myths that constantly fecundates groups, institutions and individuals with a sense of social purpose and destiny. Thus myths become equally compelling as truth and goodness inherent in the structure of the cosmos, and save peoples and cultures from the distractions of immediate and fleeting goals. It is striking that in the epoch of such widespread invasion and unsettlement as the pre-Gupta and post-Gupta periods in Indian history, the hopes, aspirations and tenor of life of the common people were kept alive and safeguarded by the Messianic myth of the Warrior-redeemer (Kalki); while the myths of Varṇa-śaṁkara or caste origin through racial admixture, Apaddharma or modification of the laws of caste and family in social crises and Kaliyuga or epoch of social conflict were invaluable for the social assimilation of the Yavana, Śaka, Hun and other mlechha groups. The Brāhmanic society of the Vedic plan obviously waned. There was widespread violation of the rules and duties of castes and families, as well as of the successive stages of the spiritual life (āśrama). Many mixed castes and the Śudras rose into social prominence. To Bhāgavatism that rose in the 5th century B.C., Mahāyāna Buddhism and other theistic cults were added between the first and fourth century A.D., and facilitated the large-scale absorption of the foreigners and Śudras into the traditional social order; while the myths of the ordained, irresistible restoration of dharma protected the people against social confusion and the corrosive influence of foreign political domination over large parts of Bhāratavarṣa. Islam's advent into India with the sword and fire of a fanatical zeal also proved less socially disruptive than in other lands due to the propagation of the various Bhakti cults that found grace and salvation for the faithful, demolishing the boundaries of caste, creed and nation. Indian civilization in its defence against foreign invasion pinned its faith as much in great myth and tradition as in sword and strategy.

The distinctive ancient Indian institution of caste had its genesis in practical social convenience and self-management of congeries of peoples of different stocks and stages of civilization who had to live together in close contiguity and co-operation in

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the village communities of the expansive river basins. The Ṛg-Vedic Aryans formulated the theory that the worthy (varaṇiya) and privileged (dvija, twice-born) castes are only those who participated in the Divine Sacrifices (yajñas). Thus the caste system satisfied at once the necessities of the rituals of the Aryan immigrants, of the maintenance of racial purity, and of the preservation of social peace through a natural stratification of groups of a heterogenous civilization embracing large indigenous Dravidian communities according to occupations, attainments and culture. Time and again in India's social history the boundaries of caste were extended so as to bring into the Indo-Aryan fold not merely the Dravidian peoples and aboriginal groups but also successive waves of foreign invaders and immigrants. The inherent principles of social accommodation and assimilation underlying the structure of castes were at no other epoch brought so powerfully into play as in the age following the large-scale Śaka and Hun invasions of Northern India from the beginning of this millenium to the rise of the Imperial Guptas.

In the vast crowded plains of India, connected by easy mountain routes with the steppes of Central and Western Asia, the political consequences of migration, war and conquest were largely nullified and the people early developed certain protective institutions; viz. the four-fold varṇa stratification, the village community and the joint family system. Such institutions and traditions were the great Indo-Aryan contributions to the problem of social integration through absorption, specialisation and ranking rather than through total mobilisation and subordination as are the procedures of several other civilizations. These constituted the frame-work safeguarding the traditional group freedoms and dharmas in the multi-group polity of India. The Huns, deflected Westward by the memorable victory of Skandagupta against them in India, destroyed under the leadership of Attila the Roman civilization (middle of the 5th century A. D.). A century later, the Ephthalite Hun leader, Mihiragula, the Indian Attila, reappeared in the Indian horizon, destroyed the civilization of Gandhara and the Punjab, and became the Kalkiraja of Jain tradition. But the Huns whom all empire-builders from the Guptas to the Palas sought to quell were, thanks to the catholic myths of social assimilation in the Dharmaśāstras, and the Mahābhārata, gradually absorbed as Kshatriya and Rajput

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clans and castes into Hinduism. Even Mihiragula himself embraced Śaivism. Such was the spell of Indian religion on the outlandish, fierce barbarians, as the Mahābhārata described them. It is these which explain at once the rigidity and flexibility of Indian caste and the periodical crises and continuity of Indian civilization. Geographical and ecological also in their origin, and hence all-pervasive are the fundamental Indian doctrines of order and unity of life, immortality and karma which have permeated all forms of religion, mythology and literature in the country. All invaders and immigrants into India have come under the spell of these ancient doctrines. These ultimately developed as a result of the commingling of the Indo-Aryan, Munda-speaking Dravidian and foreign peoples into the theories of Pantheism and Pan-karma that were integrated and re-oriented by the ethical conception of the four-fold values of life (chaturvarga), functionally interrelated to one another—enjoyment (kama), wealth (artha), righteousness (dharma) and enlightenment (moksha). In the last and perhaps the most pregnant sloka of the Bhagavad Gītā, the epitome of Hindu wisdom, we read that whenever there is the realisation of the Real or Universal man (Nārāyana-Krishna) in Man (nara, Arjuna), and man actively participates (dhanur dharah) in the promotion of the Divine plan, there are prosperity, victory, culture and justice in the State. In the Battle of Kurukshetra that stood as the symbol and inspiration of the memorable battles in Indian history, victory is assured for the side that is favoured by Sri Krishna-Nārāyana and the divine energy of Dharma, and, from the metaphysical viewpoint, that combines the most strenuous and just but detached action with the loftiest intellectual and spiritual vision. The ranking of the four major values of life in which one fulfils the other—renunciation and passion, silence and activity, also is comprehensive enough for all kinds of peoples and all types of character and personality, and combines the principles of stability and change, order and adventure.

The Indian Myth of the Cycles of History

In India the same metaphysical opposites of stability and change, dissolution and creation weave the texture of her philosophy of history. History in Indian tradition is not the biography of heroes or representative men, but an ageless

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process in which not men but the human species, not particular lives but Life cyclically grow, mature and decay. In India the circle symbolises completion and perfection. The Wheel with the movable centre is the symbol of continuing progress in the procession of time (the chakra of Vedic and Buddhist culture). Thus history, cosmic, human and personal, is envisioned as the cyclic oscillation of the Wheel. Every cycle of creation and destruction of the cosmos is called a Kalpa with a Progenitor (Brahmā) in each. One thousand Kalpas make a year of Brahmā and one thousand Brahmā years make his world-age or Yuga. The Yugas are four—Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali. Seventy-one four-fold Yugas make a Manu-interval (manvantara) with a Great Man (Manu) presiding over it and possessing its own Kings (Indra) and sages. The four Yugas, periods of human history, are associated with the waxing and waning of righteousness (Dharma) and the cyclic vicissitudes of human groups and institutions with their repercussion on human values and well-being. Indian mythology envisages endless cosmic cycles or Kalpas bearing in their bosom the process of human epochs or Yugas following each other in the infinitude of time. Thus does the ever-recurrent rhythm of the Wheel or chakra apply alike to the life and destiny of the individual, the history of mankind and the process of the cosmos. An unending series of Great Men, Creators and Kings of the earth, Brahmas and Indras reign, thrive and then pass away in their innumerable universes that come and go through countless cycles of creation, maturation, dissolution and reincarnation. Into this ageless cyclical process of the world organism India imports a moral and cultural purpose through the conception of emanation, fruition and destruction across the Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali ages of history (yugas), the moral order of Dharma, gradually lapsing from purity and perfection into disorganisation and conflict and then beginning another cycle.

From the viewpoint of social psychology, civilization has its periods of growth, maturation, stationariness and degeneration. Neither progress nor decline covers an indefinite period, and a real insight is gained into the historical process through the treatment of various cultural epochs in the light of a governing life-cycle of civilization. History does show recurrences in a long macro-cosmic vista, though these are neither absolute nor have

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identical features. The cyclical approach to the course of history has found its adherents in the West from Polybius, Machiavelli and Vico to Spengler, Sorokin and Toynbee. It is noteworthy that the great philosopher of modern history Toynbee finds in the process of universal history the same cyclical rhythm of static and dynamic, of movement and poise and movement, as defined in the oscillations of Puruṣa and Prakṛti, Yan and Yang in the pregnant imagery of the Indian and Chinese cosmo-genic myths.

Indian historiography accepts the reality of the triumphs and disasters of history alike, and insists that we learn from both the glory and the defeat of Dharma and culture, viewed as a dynamic process rather than as a stationary state. This cyclical view of man's earthly destiny and Dharma has protected the Indian people against the extremes of optimism and pessimism. And indeed few people have such a long and remarkably continuous history of five millenia, have seen such ups and downs of the social order, and learnt so much in a yet living civilization from past glories and tragedies as foils for some larger good of the world organism. It is remarkable that both the Hindu and Christian Apocalyptic conception of the end of the social order was not an idea of damnation and catastrophe but of continuity and consummation of the Divine will and law—the irresistible perpetual rise of the Dharma-rajya. Such is the tragic meliorism, leavened with social expectancy, of the Indian philosophy of history, born of the assimilation of several millenia of experience into the balance of human progression. Scant centuries cannot obviously provide the stuff out of which a true philosophy of history can emerge. This was stressed by Lord Acton who once remarked: "We can found no philosophy on the observation of four hundred years, excluding three thousand. It would be an imperfect and fallacious induction." A further limitation of the traditional approach to history arises from the fact that most ancient civilizations, including those of Egypt, Sumer, Crete, Persia, Greece and Rome, exist largely in monuments, epigraphs and historical documents. It is only when a civilization is not only ancient but at the same time living in the present with full vitality like the civilization of India, that its long-range balance of social and institutional forces can be discerned and revealed by true history.

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The Unity of Indian Civilization

The nineteenth century European historians postulated that only 'nations' have a patria and a history. In India the Indo-Aryan traditions early led to the identification of patria, Dharma and history. India is not a 'nation' in the European usage of the term. But there is an Indian civilization in a sense in which there is no European civilization. This has been built up by the distinct Indo-Aryan institutions of caste, village community and joint family, the myths of Saṃsāra and Karma, and the Vedic Dharma and way of living. This unity of Indian civilization was derived from the fundamental plan of Vedic philosophy, religion and myth that set forth the metaphysical ideal of the Universal Man and the Universal Community as facets of the progressive movement of the human spirit. While in the other great civilization of Asia, the Chinese, the global conception was a vast benevolent peace and unity of the land, established by the world monarch, the Son of Heaven as vice-regent of deity, in India the global peace and unity were grounded on man's direct intuition of the Real and the Universal within himself, whence sprang the most expansive sentiments of inter-human communion and identity. The same unity was the inspiration among the nobility and warrior classes of India to establish kingdoms and empires. And very early in Vedic times the ideal of a Universal empire (Sārvabhauma) arose on the plains of the Ganges, probably influenced by the Assyro-Babylonians or the Dravidian peoples of the Indus Valley and modified by the Indo-Aryan conception of Dharma or righteousness being the real sovereign, the king as danda or the executive, supporting and enforcing Dharma with the assistance of the four orders of the realm. The nobility and warrior order is governed by the Arthaśāstra rather than by the Dharmaśāstra which holds its sway among the priestly order. The injunctions of politics are concrete, realistic, even opportunist and sharply contrasted with the absolute moral laws and regulations that define the Dharma of the Brahmans. Yet the Kṣatriya spirit is the spirit of justice, equity and forbearance and not the spirit of brute power of Macht Politics. The Mahābhārata observes: "The heavens are centred in the ethics of the State." Like many other countries India also had her outstanding conqueror-kings—Chandragupta

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Maurya, Aśoka, Kaniṣka, Samudragupta, Harṣa, Yaśodharman, Devapāla, Rājendra Chola I, Krishnadeva Rāya, Shershah Sur, and Akbar. Invasions from Bactria and Irania that were really the pulsating ante-chambers of India were chronic and recurrent challenges to unification. From Gāndhāra and the Punjab, from the Ganges basin, western and eastern, and from Malwa and Gujarat, empires were built in successive epochs, the successive Raja Chakravartins welding peoples of different races, languages, traditions, and levels of culture into some kind of a loose political, but none the less effective, cultural unity.

In a sub-continent, broken up into many regions with wide variations in climate and natural resources, inhabited by diverse races and peoples and carved out into congeries of kingdoms, empires and republics, unity and solidarity are the most constant political aspirations in history as these are the ancient essential aims of religion, morals and the social order. No country in the world has ever through its metaphysics, religion, art and scheme of social gradation woven such a rich and enduring fabric of unity amidst such diversity which embraces not only men but all sentient creatures. Out of the welding together of the mass of Indian peoples with their various types, indigenous and exotic, in the Maurya, Gupta and Pala Empires arose the fundamental political principles of the loose union of semi-autonomous states under the king or kings and of the composite and secular culture state or Dharma-rājya. These represent the most constant elements in Indian history dovetailed into Indian empire-building and into socio-cultural integration and development.

The Primordial Social Plan of Vedic Thought

No doubt the moral and metaphysical conceptions of the Real or Cosmic Man and the Commonalty of Mankind were the spiritual counterparts of the ever-continued, ever-reinforced processes of building up a United India, politically and socially. Empires recurrently fail, as force has its peculiar limitations for national unification in a country with such natural barriers, huge population and infinite social complexity and heterogeneity as India. Thus her civilization draws through the epochs more surely upon humanist myths—the political myths of the Kingdom of Universal Moral Law (Dharma-rājya) and the Universal Empire, the social myths of the Chaturvarṇa, Varṇa-śaṁkara and

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Kaliyuga, the religious myths of the Avatāra, the Bodhisattva and the Compassionate Bhagavān and Śakti, the moral myths of Obligations and Sacrifices and the intellectual myth of the Triple Way of Living, of wisdom, action without involvement and worship (Jñāna, Karma, Bhakti). These have engendered common patterns of morality and ways of living among the principal regions of India from the great snow-clad mountains in the north to the southern ocean, and effected that solidarity of Indian society which blood and iron can achieve with but limited and temporary success. It is myth, metaphysics and religion and the forms and symbols of art in which these are significantly and powerfully revealed from epoch to epoch that have indeed governed the unity, integrity and vitality of Indian civilization.

The dominant characteristic of that civilization evolved through many political vicissitudes is the leavening of the general mass of the population by the grandiose myths of the intellectual elite whose different schools of thought all show a remarkable agreement as regards the unity and continuity of Life, Mind and Society in the macrocosm—the basic metaphysical assumption of Indian life and culture. Racially and socially, there is an upward movement of absorption and assimilation of lower and exotic groups at inferior levels of culture. Intellectually and spiritually, there is a downward movement of Dharma and dissemination of the traditional wisdom and social order of scholastic theory that governs every department of life and thought from morals and metaphysics to politics, aesthetics and erotics. It is from the primordial plan of Vedic philosophy that the whole of the social scheme and institutions of India indeed springs, although only as an application to a contingent realm. Toynbee speaks of the small creative minorities of civilizations carrying along with them by dint of charm the "uncreative mass", the bulk of which are "men of like passions and of identical human nature with Primitive Man". In India the social faculty of "mimesis" brought into play by the elite through redactions of the epics and Purāṇas and the various Dharma-śāstras in the early centuries of this millenium, and then by the great mass bhakti and vernacular movements, especially from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, contributed towards a high average level of social intelligence, culture and spirituality among the

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common people. All this tended to establish a profound unity among the people at both the social and metaphysical levels grounded in the spiritual affinity between the realm of the absolute and the realm of the contingent. The universal principles in pure scholastic mode have linked together human and cosmic life and destiny in India in a manner unique in the history of human civilization. Metaphysics, myth, art and ritual, all open a common gate through which the Indian man attains his dharma and moksha and enters his saṃsāra, that only as an inherent totality possesses value, even sanctity.

The Classical Traditions of the Imperial Guptas

The Golden Age of the Imperial Guptas saw a national renaissance in India. In the field of social and political myth-making, philosophy, literature and the fine arts, we encounter perfection of form, based upon a unity in which the detail is subordinated to the whole and the abstract, and a clarity of conception which springs from an ideal of truth and beauty. The Gupta Age saw a correspondence between the restraint, rationality and poise of its "classical" art and literature and the spirit of law and conformity in the social organisation. The norms of society, politics and religion, like those of the fine arts, reached "classical" simplicity, rationality and universality under the Gupta Empire and since then guided Indian life (from the fourth century onward). The succeeding epochs have accepted the Gupta tradition not merely in poetic, artistic and philosophical expression but also in social form, as "classical"—the natural product of a mature civilization in a privileged era, and again and again experienced a revival of creative adventures in every field of life by returning to that great heritage.

Urbanisation, trade and commerce, the rise of a rich merchant and professional class and racial admixture brought about a profound cultural transformation that began under the Indo-Bactrians and Kushans in the early centuries A.D. and continued through the five golden centuries of Gupta and post-Gupta renaissance. From the intellectual adventures and devotions of foreign convert groups, such as the Kushans, Indo-Bactrians, Śakas, Ābhiras and Huns assimilated into the caste system in the Kushan and Gupta eras of urbanisation and commerce, arose three catholic humanitarian movements that challenged the rigid

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tenets and formalities of the older creeds: viz., first, Mahāyāna Buddhist culture, with its gospel of collective love and salvation that rose to the height of its fervour and missionary and levelling zeal in the "second holy land of Buddhism"; second, Bhāgavata culture, Śaiva and Vasudeva-Krishnaite; and third, Tāntrika culture, that were all equally proselytising and social egalitarian in their influences both in the country as well as in the Hindu colonies in Further India and the Indian Archipelago. Mahāyāna Buddhism did not introduce a new social order in India as did Christianity in Europe, since it was born out of the spiritual intimacy of Brahmanism and Buddhism and shared with Bhāgavatism similar humanistic tendencies.

The Indianisation of Middle and East Asia

Indian religions rose to their greatest impulsion and universality thrice, covering vast periods of Indian history. First, Mahāyāna Buddhism rose in the first centuries of the Christian era in cosmopolitan Gāndhāra, Kashmir and Udyāna and gradually spread from the Vanksu (Oxus) and the Sītā (Tarim) to the Hwangho and across the Purvasāgara to the Indian Archipelago. The spread of Buddhism became the spearhead of a process of Indianisation of Middle Asia for a thousand years up to the rise of the kingdom of Ghazni. Second, Neo-Brahmanism of the classical Gupta age that started with the redactions of the epics, Purāṇas and Tantras and played a significant role in the colonial and cultural expansion of India in Dvīpāntara Bhārata—the extensive and less known south-eastern regions beyond the shores of India. Third, Tāntrikism that played a similar role in the Indianisation of South-east Asia under the aegis of the Pala Empire. On the whole, if we reckon India's southern expansion and adventures, from the earliest episode of the colonisation of Ceylon in the fifth century B.C. the movement of Indian colonisation in South-east Asia might be regarded as having stretched for about two thousand years till the very advent of Muslim Arabs in the East in the fifteenth century.

War, politics and commerce can explain neither the rise of the kingdoms of Khotan, Uigar and Turfan across the Pamir and Funan, Champa, Paupan, Sri Vijaya and Majapahit in the East, nor the fullest expression of the broad humanism and compassion of Indian Art at Borobodur, Prambanam, Angkor-vat,

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Lun-huang or Lung-men beyond the frontiers of India. It is the impulsion of the myths and fine arts of Brahmanism, Mahāyāna Buddhism and Tāntrikism that migrated to the various Hindu colonies with the monk missionaries, scholars and merchant-devotees and from the various Indian universities that explain the adoption of the entire heritage of Indian culture by the peoples of Middle and East Asia in the course of a whole millenium. In a sense half of Asia lived according to the myths and traditional order of India. All over Asia the spirit of self-discipline, renunciation and wisdom of India evoked profound reverence.

Illumination in the Dark Ages

The history of Indian civilization has no dark and middle ages. Western European civilization was completely obliterated from the end of the fifth to the middle of the eleventh century by the barbarian invasions. India never experienced a debacle like the fall of the Roman Empire as the result of the invasion of the Huns, Goths and Vandals, with the advent of either the Yuechi, Śaka and Hun hordes or in the later centuries the Muslim Turko-Afghans. The strength and impulsion of Indian culture during the periods of Muslim invasion and conquest are abundantly evident in the continued struggle and independence of many Hindu kingdoms, the last and most powerful of them being Vijayanagar, which fell after as many as eight centuries since the Muslim occupation of Sind. Other countries in Asia and Europe succumbed easily and quickly to the unrelenting, advancing sword of Islam. The centuries of India's struggle with Islam saw the triumph of Indian art and culture in Sumatra, Java, Siam and Cambodia. In the Eastern colonies there was also witnessed a remarkable attempt at the development of composite cults and rituals in which Brahmanism, Mahāyāna Buddhism and Tāntrikism showed a fresh and vigorous synthesis, not met with in the Indian soil. The composite worship of Siva, Buddha and Vishnu or Brahmā, for instance, ran parallel with the cult of Trimurti in Gupta India but showed a maturer development in Java and Cambodia in the very century when Indian cities and temples were being razed to the ground by Sultan Mahmud's armies.

Several distinct contributions of Indian culture are discernible during about three centuries (from the thirteenth to the

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fifteenth century) of struggle with the foreign Muslim rulers: first, the reinforcement of the ancient Maurya-Gupta-Pala idea of paramountcy associated with a loose central control and delegation of responsibility of administration to semi-independent states; second, the development of the idea of a composite, secular state under the Bahmani kings in the south, the Hussain Shahi and Sur dynasties in the east and Moghul Emperors from Akbar to Shah Jahan in the north; and third, the flowering of the Bhakti and Indian Sufi movements from the sixteenth century onwards that abandoned ritualism and dogma, admitted to their folds both Hindus and Muslims and high and low castes, and with an incredible liberty of religious doctrines and practices initiated new religious experiments for bringing about amity between the vast Hindu and Muslim populations.

The Major Renaissances in India

The famous historian Jacob Burckhardt observes: "A peculiarity of higher cultures is their susceptibility to renaissances. Either one and the same or a later people partially adopts a past culture into its own by a kind of hereditary right or by right of admiration. These renaissances are to be distinguished from the politico-religious restorations with which they nevertheless coincide here and there." There is no civilization in the world which has experienced so many renaissances as Indian civilization. The striking features of the major renaissances in India which sometimes have overlapped with political integrations and restorations may be briefly indicated. First, the intellectual and religious renaissance from the sixth century to the third century B.C. embodying the revolt against Vedic ritualism, priesthood and class stratification. This synchronised with a great spiritual ferment in the whole world from Greece to China, and culminated in the rise of the Krishna-Vāsudeva cult, Jainism and Buddhism in India and the spread of the universal Indian faith in Gāndhāra, Seistan and Chinese Turkestan under Asoka. The Mauryan Empire gave its full support to the movement in religion, literature and art that originally sprang from the eastern republican states and kingdoms north of the Ganges. Second, the renaissance of Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism, accelerated by the cultural intercourse with the Perso-Hellenes in cosmopolitan Gāndhāra and Western India and the

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devotion of converted foreign groups such as the Indo-Bactrians, Śakas and Kushans. This was responsible for the march of Buddhism across the Pamir under the Kushan Empire, so significant for the expansion of the "Sangha of the four directions" and the Indianisation of the entire Middle Asia. The Mahāyāna renaissance, born in the Kundalavana monastery in Kashmir, was in fact the main inspiration of the unique historic phenomenon of the Indianisation of Asia extending from Gāndhāra to Japan, which illumined the course of Asian history for a whole milennium from the first century A.D. to one thousand A.D. Such Indianisation was accelerated by the continuous migration and settlement for about two millenia of Indian monk-scholars and missionaries in other lands and the influx of pilgrims and scholars from other countries into the home-land of Buddhism and Brahmanism. The cultural hegemony of India over the rest of Asia in the Buddhist middle ages was widely embodied in the Māhāyana ideal of Trailokya-vijaya—the spiritual conquest of the three worlds. Third, the neo-Brahmanical renaissance of art, literature and culture that reached its pinnacle of glory with the consolidation of the Gupta Empire and lasted for full five centuries. It provided also the impetus for the colonisation of Dvīpāntara Bhārata that came under the suzerainty of the Guptas. Here again both the restoration of an Indian Empire and the adoption of Śaivism, Vaishnavism and Buddhism by the foreigners such as the Śakas, Huns and Ābhiras who were admitted into the wide frame of Indian culture, none the less due to their unbounded sense of admiration, were the main-springs of the renaissance. The Empires of Harsha Śilāditya and Gurjara-Pratihāras—bulwarks against foreign invasions—continued the same cultural renaissance. Fourth, the Tāntrika renaissance which followed the Gupta-Brahmanical revival and its assimilation of Mahāyāna, Vajarayāna and Sahajayāna Buddhism in the next four or five centuries. Just as Mahāyāna Buddhism ushered in the golden age of Buddhist art, so did Tāntrika syncretism initiate the golden age of Brahmanical art both in India and in the Hindu colonies of the Pacific. Fifth, the later Buddhist Tāntrika renaissance under the Pala and Sena Empires from the eighth to the eleventh century A.D. which played a vital part in the spread of Indian Tāntrikism, art and culture in Nepal, Tibet and Brahmadesa comprising a large part of south-east Asia.

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The course of the later renaissances was equally marked by a rich and magnificent harvest. The Pallava, the Chalukya and the Chola renaissances, having contributed splendidly to the development of temple architecture and sculpture in South India, were largely responsible for directing the course of Indian expansion in the Pacific. Seventh, the renaissance of literature and the fine arts under the Empire of Vijayanagar which left its indelible impress upon the tastes, manners and qualities of the people of Karnataka and the neighbourhood. Eighth, the religious renaissance and the social egalitarian and vernacular movements that began with Rāmānanda and spread from Maharashtra to Kamarupa from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century A.D. This movement was characterised by spontaneity, vitality and ecleticism, and its extension had little to do with the patronage of the state but was based on the faith and idealism of the common people. It was therefore the people's renaissance, the people from Gujarat to Orissa having one mind, one vision and one language of the spirit. The people's renaissance coincided with at least three movements of political restoration. In Rajputana the political integration and revival began in the fifteenth century with several Rajput Chiefs such as those of Sisodia and Rathor consolidating their power in autonomous principalities, and the next century witnessed a glorious renaissance of Rajasthan painting and sculpture that also influenced the rise and development of the Himachala folk school of painting in the Punjab states. In Maharashtra the religious renaissance represented by the Bhakti movement from Jnanadeva to Tukaram merged in the national political restoration under Sivaji and his successors in the seventeenth century, and led to the establishment of a mighty empire that might have prevented British conquest but for a series of errors, accidents and misfortunes. The period of Maratha imperialism in the eighteenth century was associated with a splendid literary and cultural revival. In the Bengal delta, taking advantage of the difficulty of access due to the network of rivers, channels and lagoons and the strength and efficiency of the river flotilla, Musa Khan and the twelve Bārabhuiyas of Bengal, including Kedar Rāi of Śripur, Pratāpāditya of Jessore and Rāmachandra of Bakla carved out independent territories of their own and carried on the last heroic battle of independence against the Moghul

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Empire, with fluctuating fortunes which could not however assume the character of a concerted resistance. In the regime of the Bārabhuiyas, who were looked upon as heroes and national leaders of the people, folk-song and ballads sung from mouth to mouth bear ample testimony to the creative spirit of the people in this significant epoch of Bengal. Ninth, the renaissance in literature, painting, architecture and handicraft under the Moghul Emperors. This was the outcome of the Moghul patronage of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit scholars, the mingling of Persian and Indian art elements and traditions among Persian and Hindu artists in the imperial and provincial courts and the encouragement of education through the establishment of numerous Madrasas, Khanqahs and Maktabs. Moghul painting, music, architecture and crafts and Indo-Persian and Hindi literature found their golden ages in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries A.D. And tenth, the nineteenth century cultural renaissance that began in Bengal, with Rammohan Roy as its great harbinger and pioneer, as India's spontaneous and powerful reaction to the Western challenge to her ideals and institutions. This continues to fashion the development of India and her culture to this day. India is such a vast country that minor and subsidiary renaissances were also often met with under independent kingdoms such as Kashmir, Gujarat, Malwa, Rajputana, Bundelkhand, Bengal and the triple states of the South. Mention may be made of other renaissances that sprang from philosophical and religious movements and were confined to particular regions.

The Common Trends of the Indian Renaissances

Renaissances reflect the character and temper of a particular civilization. In India the renaissances were characterised by two common trends: politically, the objective was the achievement of unity amidst the multiplicity of races, languages, customs and manners of the different states and regions into which the country was divided; culturally and metaphysically, the objective was the identification of the moral and spiritual perfection of the individual with the Dharma of culture, of groups and of the state. Each group, caste or profession, the law-givers, the priests, the artisans, the agriculturists and above all the kings and the order of Kshatriyas conformed to the rule

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of its Dharma. India with her semi-autonomous families, castes, village communities, professions and brotherhoods regulated by their dharmas and customs, as interpreted from time to time by the Dharmaśāstras, was one of the least governed countries in the world. Next to the Vedas, the Angas, the Smṛtis and the Purāṇas, the customs (dharma) of regions, caste-groups and families were authoritative and could not be disregarded. The scholastic mode of thought in India identifies the moral responsibility of the individual neither with the glory of the state nor with the privilege and power of social groups or classes but with the unlimited extension of the human community. The individual's self-perfection and the brotherhood of mankind are seen as facets of the same movement of the human spirit. Social and economic equality and the fraternity of mankind did not exist in India on the plane of merely rational arguments nor were used for specious exploitation of the unprivileged classes. Dharmarājya is theoretically, therefore, universal as the salvation of the individual is collective. The pathway to mukti and politico-cultural integration becomes the same. The cultural aim dominated the renaissances because, unlike the course of European development, culture or dharma was overwhelmingly stronger in India than the political organisation, and the people under the scholastic discipline were not ruled by historical occurrences but themselves ruled the world as metaphysicians—Yājñavalkya, Sri Krishna, Mahāvira, Buddha, Vasubandhu, Nāgārjuna, Gorakhnāth, Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja and Rāmānanda. The state was in fact eclipsed by the high moral and metaphysical purpose and enthusiasm of the people who were much more concerned with philosophical and religious movements initiating renaissances than with even historical events and changing fortunes of the state. Buddha's Dharmachakra-pravartana was perhaps a greater event than the foundation of the Mauryan Empire, Śaṁkara's exposition of the Vedānta-Sūtras than the militant incursion of the Muslims, and Chaitanya's sankirtana procession from Navadvīpa to Vṛndāvana and from Puri to Pandharpur than the struggle for independence of the Bengal Bārabhuiyas against the Moghul Viceroys.

Both culture and state in India were subjected through the ages of renaissances to the most powerful trends of thought, of metaphysical abstraction and the scholastic formulation of the

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common myths, norms and traditions of the social order. And the unity and solidarity of Indian civilization that were cemented by myths and the traditional social order have been far more deep-seated than what can be achieved by nationalism, militarism and racialism. Renaissances were far less unsettling in India than in the West, because they were inheritors of the entire myths and traditions of the country for all times, and also because of the relative freedom of her social life and culture from the fetters of an all-pervasive state and feudalistic authority of the different social orders or estates which were all regulated by certain common norms and traditions. Each renaissance was the harbinger of a new universalism for people and culture, and of a fresh triumph of the spirit of man. It was accordingly a fresh binder of the people calling them to renew their possession of the magnificent intellectual and social legacy for the attainment of the perfection of the individual and of the true spirit of universal humanity.

There is no break in the continuity of Indian history between the ancient and medieval periods. India in all historical periods always lived according to certain norms and traditions of society and culture that were formulated in the holy land of the Ganges and systematized and clarified under the Imperial Guptas and again in the short-lived Moghul Empire of the tolerant Akbar, Jehangir and Shahjahan. India's scholasticism, religion and dharma-śhāstra alike supported a traditional order in which community and community, caste and caste, man and man could live without antagonism and chaos. These are also surely the major problems of present-day politics in India. The Indian historian's myth-making, norm and standard of judgment must find the way to their solution by making past values, traditions and events significant for the present generation. Indian civilization, after the British rule for a century and a half with its stress on liberty, equality and sovereignty of the people, is today renewing its traditions on the modern spiral. Toynbee remarks: "the geneses of all civilizations could be described in the phrase of General Smuts—'Mankind is once more on the move'." Let India make her fresh start with a proper understanding of the past and the effect of traditions within the social sphere of the individual.

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Vast political and social transformations implying a wholesale substitution of institutions and traditions have been afoot as a result of the British occupation and impact of Western intellectual and social movements—secularism, democracy and socialism. India can rebuild her society and play her due role in world civilization neither by bolstering up archaic social forms nor by indiscriminately borrowing Western social habits, institutions and procedures, but by adapting the accumulated force of environment, race and tradition to the spirit of the age. The zeitgeist is the unity and balance of man both within himself and his group and culture—the world community; this is also the abiding and ever-recurrent refrain of the drama of Indian history. In the midst of the world-wide mechanisation and standardisation and encroachment upon the essential and irrepressible liberties of the human person, India's ancient group and co-operative spirit, historic regionalism and decentralisation in her traditional multi-group polity and the cultured pattern of shared living and service clearly show the way to the next stage in her historical evolution. Thus may the Indian state, steering clear between regimentation and exaggerated individualism, and between power-politics and inept internationalism, reflect the universal social values of the individual, and become saturated with a sense of collectivist humanist mission and purpose. India's most glorious and privileged epochs and movements in the past were dominated by universalist cultural aims; and a revival of this historic spirit may enable her to enrich the common world pool of values and traditions with those universalist norms and standards that are specially needed by this war-torn age, and that indeed measure the quality of a country's civilization.

The Age of Coercion and War

The atomic age of mankind, now preparing itself for the most devastating global war that may destroy the entire human species, has inherited the suspicion, hatred and bitterness of the two European world-wars of this century. These were preceded by the nationalist wars of the nineteenth century, the French revolutionary wars at the close of the eighteenth century, the wars of religion from the middle of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century and the crusades of the eleventh century, all

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inter-linked with one another in the bloody pageant of the European peoples, which have stained their mighty achievements thick with blood in the various continents. Man fights wars and revolutions when his numbers outrun resources in unfavourable and limited territories and corridors of his migration or when traditions and dogmas obtain an exaggerated emphasis and brook no deviation nor heresy. The fanatical zeal for the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre, the Catholic and Protestant dogmas, the doctrine of the Divine right of kings, the French Revolutionary creed of egalitarianism, Nationalism, Fascism and Nazism—all represent lop-sided emphasises that recurrently brought about armed conflicts or needed bloody revolutions for their liquidation. The fixed and intolerant ideologies of Capitalism, Communism and thinly veiled Racialism today divide whole peoples and continents leading them to mutual extermination. Francisco Romero observed: "Occidentals are uncompromising and intolerant because they do not for a moment doubt that there exists one true doctrine and many wrong ones. The Orient, save for transitory exceptions, has been tolerant. The faithful of Oriental creeds, for example, are partial to religious congresses, an idea impossible to occur to Europeans." Mankind is yet barbaric in its resolution of ideological conflicts by violence, and, in this age of improved cultural intercourse and technological and economic unification of the globe, deflected from the main direction of history by the pre-occupation with and intolerance of specialised traditions and dogmas. It is not through wasteful outbursts of coercion and conflict but through the amplification of the ancient Socratic method, the dialectical reconciliation of thesis and anti-thesis, of opposite and contradictionary myths, traditions and modes of thought in a higher synthesis in both the intellectual field and the field of constructive social experiments that history can regain both its momentum and path of advance, releasing hundreds of millions of men from allegiance to opposing dogmas, moralities and social systems now driving them into armed camps in the different continents.

Mankind—the Theme and Final Entity of History

Historical knowledge forms the essential preliminary to such a global dialectical resolution of ideological conflicts by fostering mutual understanding and appreciation of goals, values and norms

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and of the alternative social possibilities—a global confluence of historic traditions and cultures. Montesquieu, Vico, Herder, Ranke and Hegel, all stressed the manifold, colourful variety of cultural values and expressions of different peoples met with in the broad movement of history. Sorokin, Spengler and Pareto have in recent years brought to a focus the significance of myths, traditions and values in human history very different from those that have shaped Western civilization. The modern crisis of Western civilization, whose myths and values provided the material for the intellectual self-complacence and naive glorification of Europe of Gibbon, Macaulay, Seignobos and Bryce in the nineteenth century and the pessimism and exaggerated emphasis of class predatoriness of Nordau, Bakunin and Marxist historians of this century, especially calls for an understanding of the myths and values of the most enduring civilizations in human history. Successful travel and exploration in space-times—in the history of cultures—are much facilitated by concentrating attention to the permanent mile-stones in the march of mankind which besides appeal to universal human nature and experience. Spengler takes pains to show how the totality of a civilization comprising its social, economic, aesthetic and religious values and aspirations integrated together into a harmonious whole is so unique and elusive that it cannot be easily understood except by a person born into it. But the diversities of cultural patterns also reveal the universally and rationally human elements in all cultures. The march of history records, on the whole, entire humanity, profiting from the diffusion and inter-penetration of different cultural values and traditions. Thus the proper subject-matter of all histories is supra-national, universal humanity with its concepts and trends conceived only in reference to the common vicissitudes of humanity and in subordination to its total march. It is only the notion of universal humanity that can furnish the criteria of evaluation of the qualities and attributes of particular nations and cultures and their specific trends of growth and specialisation and truly define such concepts as those of aggressive chauvinism and imperialism or national balance and sense of proportion.

Every history builds up event by event, age by age, "the unity of the whole", comprising the myths, traditions and norms of mankind, the final entity in human history. "The universe

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including the earth, heaven and neither world, is our country." "Mankind is our kind." "The creative act in history is directed inwards the goal of world-maintenance, unity and progress" (loka jātra, loka saṁgraha, loka siddhi), mentions the Mahābhārata. "Man's pattern of individual conduct should be so shaped as to obtain universal acceptance and validity" is the teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā. These are ancient Indian postulates. Through the divergent and even contradictory lines of development of different human cultures in different regions we find an increased commonness of patterns of thought, values and faith in the structural order of mankind. We find also individual cultures rising to their highest when plasticity, freedom and universality are at their summit. Both trends contribute not towards "tribe" nationalism but towards a unified world society. Brahmanical Vedāntism, Mahāyāna Buddhism, Stoicism, Christianity, Enlightenment, Scientific Humanitarianism and Socialism have contributed in great measure in different epochs of history to reinforce the spirit of universality. There is a sense of imperativeness of direction in history, corresponding to the development from the seed to the flower, about the maturation from specific culture to world culture as the destiny of the human species. Yet at no epoch in human history has mankind been so mightily challenged by what Paul Tillich calls the Demonic in history due to the lusts and fears of irrational humanity.

One World and the Philosophy of History

The task of the twentieth century is the building up of a single world-culture which is fatefully pressing upon us as the *sine qua non* of human survival. Universal history rightly judges a nation or age according to its contribution to the common pool of cultural values and traditions of humanity. That contribution it can make not through exaggerated, single-tracked specialisation in a set of traditions, dogmatism or obsession, but through forbearance, toleration and mutual give-and-take of cultural values and ways of living. This impulsion can come only through the moral and religious initiative of individuals, saturated with a sense of metaphysical values, who from the central warmth of the quickened, enlarged cosmic self can assure the peace, solidarity and communion of mankind. It is

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they who can impregnate all institutions including the state with a sense of moral mission and cultural responsibility. False ideologies that embody one-sided truths and partial values cause tensions. These can be corrected only by individuals who can integrate Truth with Goodness, Justice and Beauty, the universal supreme values with the intellectual concepts and doctrines. Thus can they attain and disseminate the vision, experience and loyalty of one world both in worship and social action. The intellectual and moral development of mankind similarly depends upon the integration of separate intellectual, aesthetic and moral traditions of different peoples into a single common world-pool of Truth, Goodness and Righteousness as both personal and cosmic imperatives. What Edmund Burke spoke of the unity of society is truer of the unity of world society: "It is to be looked on with reverence. It is a partnership in all sciences, a partnership in all art, a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be detained in any generation, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead and those who are to be born." Religion and state may be separate with their independent spheres of social action, but ethical religion has to play an increasing role not merely in developing the modern concept of the welfare or service state and superseding power-politics by goodness politics but also in bringing its warmth and devotion to universal righteousness and the community of mankind.

The modern philosophy of history governed by the Christian conception of humanity's march to the Day of Judgment, the nineteenth century evolutionary doctrine of Progress as a universal law and the Marxist notion of mankind's inevitable dialectical march towards the classless society through class struggle breeds a sense of cultural necessity as irrevocable as destiny itself. The conception of an inner unalterable certainty, driving peoples and their leaders blindly on by the surge of events as we find, for instance, in Spengler's fate-laden logic of history or in the Marxist dialectical formula of human development may be appropriate to the great crisis of modern Western civilization, but is entirely incompatible with the creative urge and expression of the greater part of mankind. The twentieth century conception of Progress must change from utopianism and

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pessimism to meliorism that will reject both facile optimism and incurable defeatism and stress hopeful striving. Mankind's goal of one world, with its interknit fortunes of prosperity and misery, peace and war for the various nations, can be reached only by the conscious harnessing by individual and nation of cultural and spiritual traditions and values for guiding and democratising, and hence deepening and accelerating the movement of world security, liberty and justice. Mankind's historic continuity is governed as much by man belonging to a country, race or class shedding his mutable aspects, his narrow images of himself in his opinions, beliefs and faiths as by the world consciously striving towards a moral and spiritual unity through the synthesis of various cultural traditions and values and their fruitful application in global methods of co-operation. The philosophy of history finds mankind's mile-stones of advance across the dark, sanguinary roads of the past marked not by dogmatism and absolutism, fanaticism and utopianism that come to possess peoples, drive them to violence and fade away in history, but by cultural syncretism, moral and religious humanism and the rising stature of the free human personality. This truth of history is nowhere expressed more eloquently than in the Indian epic, the Mahābhārata, written for the clarification of India's cultural values and norms in a period of unprecedented social turmoil and acute rivalry of opinions and faiths like the one we are facing in the present juncture:

"Logical argument is inconclusive; the Vedas are dissimilar;
There is no sage whose doctrines can be taken as
authoritative.
The verities of Dharma lie hidden in the inaccessible
recesses of the soul;
The traditions followed by the many show the true way."

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BOOK I

ANCIENT AND CLASSICAL TRADITIONS

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PART I

THE PATTERN OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER I

THE CULTURAL INTERPRETATION OF INDIAN HISTORY

Indian Civilization, a Story of Human Values

The establishment of the Republic of India on the 26th January 1950, two centuries after the commencement of British hegemony, marks the beginning of a new phase of development of Indian civilization, which after an unprecedented ancient course, now glorious, now chequered, is once again on the march. At such a period it is necessary to review the qualities and trends of Indian civilization, the dominant spiritual, aesthetic and social values that underlie its past achievements and explain its endurance and persistent vitality. The cultural and institutional heritage of India is not a fortune to boast of and dissipate, but a precious trust to be preserved and enriched for the future. Only on the basis of a right understanding how her civilization was shaped and developed, and of an adequate appreciation how the values of life were scaled and reoriented through the five thousand years of her history can we face the future with determination, hope and courage.

Indian civilization is largely a history of human values, of the development of philosophies, religions, arts and ways of collective living. India became political minded only when she was threatened with foreign invasions and conquests. Maurya, Gupta, Puṣyabhūti, Gurjara-Pratihāra and Pāla imperialisms were all responses to foreign irruptions and impacts. From the Maurya to Moghul times, kingdoms and empires usually grew up in the rich and populous Middle India (Madhyadeśa), the ancient principal seat of Indian civilization, with the Ganges-Jamuna corridor and the plateau of Malwa as bastions of

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resistance against invaders. In the south, the Āndhra, Pallava, Chālukya, Chola and Vijayanagar empires were maritime ones; and the Marathas failed to establish an enduring empire largely because of the neglect of the navy. All these Indian empires, although born in the crucible of aggressions, foreign or internal, never remained altogether military, but made some unique contributions to India's endless story of the development of religions, philosophies, myths and arts that have survived the vicissitudes of politics. Dharmavijaya had its imperial exponents besides Aśoka the Righteous, as for instance, the Imperial Guptas, Vardhanas and Pālas with their programmes of 'world conquest' (trailokyavijaya).

Indian history has been usually treated from the political angle. In this sub-continent where have lived together many peoples and cultures with a striking measure of local and functional self-government, a merely political or economic interpretation of history becomes inadequate. The dense population of the Indus and Ganges basins to which the Greek writers bear testimony as early as the Maurya epoch has prevented the full impact of foreign conquest and occupation, and promoted the assimilation of the various race and culture elements. A decentralised polity is also affected far less by political events than by movements in religion, ideology and culture. An Indian view must regard history as *multi-dimensional*—an integration of the trends of philosophy, religion, art and social development reinforced, of course, by those of politics, war and peace.

India's Cultural Suzerainty over Half of Asia

A narrow, lop-sided, political view of Indian development has suffered all the more due to political prejudice that has blinded many European scholars to the gifts of India to world culture. The history of a country which has given to one-half of humanity in Asia her ethics, religion and metaphysics cannot be authentic if it remains indifferent towards the complex intellectual and religious currents and cross-currents.

There are, indeed, few countries in the world like India whose history is a history of philosophical traditions and movements and dialectical arguments in metaphysics and religion that have also influenced other lands. The state was in fact cast into the shade by people who cared much more for their

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philosophies, patterns of worship, and standards of morality, than for historical events. India's holy books that have shaped Asian cultures comprise a good number. Those that were carried to Central Asia and China include the Brahmanical Vedas, Āgamas and Rāmāyaṇa and the Buddhistic Tripiṭaka, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, Madhyamikā Vṛtti, Lalitavistāra, Buddha Charita, Prajñāpāramitā, Śraddhotpāda, Aśokāvadāna, Abhidharmakosha and Sūtrālaṁkāra; while the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa, Jātakas, Milinda Pañha, Lalitavistāra, Manusmṛti, Purāṇas, Āgamas and Tantras went to Ceylon, Further India and Indonesia, as attested by many versions and representations in art. The apathy and misunderstanding, if not positive distaste, of many Western Indologists have extended also to the realm of art. Like the Epics and Sūtras, Purāṇas, Āgamas and Tantras, Indian statues, bronzes and paintings, carried by generations of Indian and foreign monk-pilgrims, had been the chief vehicles of dissemination of India's culture in Central Asia, China, Tibet, Nepal, Further India and Japan. Beyond the specific geographical boundaries of India, Indian civilization built up an ideological Greater India from Gāndhāra, Kāpiśa, Khotan (Kamna), Kashgar, Uch-Turfan (Bharuka), Kuchi and Karashahr (Agnideśa) to Siṁhala, Burma (Śrīkṣetra), Malaya (Malayadvīpa), Siam (Dvāravatī), Cambodia (Kambuja), Annam (Champā), Sumatra (Suvarṇadvīpa), Java (Yavadvīpa) and Borneo (Varuṇadvīpa).

The Ideal Frontiers of India

The national epic of India, the Mahābhārata, as well as the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the saga of the Gupta age, indeed, envisioned a considerable part of the Asian mainland designated as Jambūdvīpa as directly under the cultural suzerainty of India. But Indian civilization had crossed the Pamir centuries earlier, and Mauryan institutions had transplanted themselves in Chinese Turkestan even in the pre-Buddhist period. F. W. Thomas refers to a certain number of Greek terms in the Shan Shan inscriptions, which might have been brought from the Indian side, besides the division of the country into Siṁa, Śata and Sahasra (hundreds and thousands of villages) as in India, and the Maurya ornate, official and epistoral style along with such words as lekha (letter), lekha-hāraka (letter-carrier) and pothī (book). The name of the town mayor (nāgaraka) also came from contemporary Indian

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cities along with monasteries, nunneries and temples which were attributed to the "Āryas". Thus bits of India were established beyond the mountains under the regime of the Imperial Mauryas. The entire trans-Indus borderland of India from Kandahar to Seistan had indeed been known in the two centuries before and after Christ as "White India", and remained more Indian than Iranian until the Muslim subjugation. The native population in Middle Asia comprised a strong Indian element; while Indian culture and Indian scripts, Kharoshthī and Brāhmī, were prevalent in the Tarim basin in Khotan, Karia, Nia, Kashgar, Kuchi and Karashahr with their Buddhist vihāras as flourishing as those of India in the Gupta age and after. Fa Hien who visited Shan Shan in 400 A.D. observes:—"From this point (Lob Region) travelling westwards the nations that one passes through are all similar in this respect (i.e. in the practice of the religion of India), and all those who have left the family (i.e. monks and novices) study Indian books and the Indian spoken language (Sanskrit)."

Through several centuries, when India controlled the Central Asian land-routes and the Eastern sea-routes, Indian culture, religion and trade continued to reach far beyond the limits of India. The English rulers have bequeathed to us, obviously, a cramped, restricted geographical conception of India; and we have lost at present even that lively appreciation of the significance of the "scientific" frontiers of India in Gāndhāra and Kashmir which we come across, for instance, in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the sacred legend of Gupta imperialism. This refers to the Darvikā valley leading over the Khyber Pass and Kashmir as Indian territory.

Kālidāsa, the national poet of the Gupta age, in his famous description of Raghu's digvijaya, reminiscent of the conquests of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II Vikramāditya, also envisioned the ideal frontiers of India extending up to the Vanksu (Oxus) and the Lauhitya (Brahmaputra), and including Bactria (Bāhlīka), Badakshan, Afghanistan (Kamboja, Gāndhāra), Ladakh, the Tibeto-Himalayan region, Ṇepal, Bhutan and Assam (Prāgjyotiṣa). Mention may be made here of Samudragupta's diplomatic relations with the suzerain of Balkh and Gāndhāra, his reception of an embassy and gifts from Meghavarman of Ceylon coupled with a request that he might be permitted to build a monastery

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at Bodh-Gaya for Ceylonese pilgrims, and of "the conquest of Vāhlīkas after crossing in warfare the seven mouths of the river Sindhu" by the Emperor Chandra (identified by some scholars with Chandragupta II) of the Meheraulī iron pillar epigraph. With Kālidāsa and the authors of the Purāṇas the northern and north-western boundary of India was represented by "the Himalaya, the lord of the mountains, spanning the wide land from the Eastern to the Western ocean", the Hindukush, the Karakoram, and the Iranian plateau with the Kirthar and the Sulaiman ranges, forming parts of the six-fold Varṣa Parvata (Himavān, Hemakūṭa, Niṣadha, Nīla, Śveta and Śṛngavān), which thus "entered" (avagāhya) into both the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. The Maurya and Gupta Empires which were the spear-heads of national renaissance knew the importance of defending the "natural" frontiers (pratyanta) and appointed Wardens of the Marches. Thus cultural nationalism was associated with a natural geographical and political unfolding of India under the Imperial Mauryas and Guptas.

The Identification of Bharata and Culture

The impact of religion upon cultural nationalism in India through the ages has also been underrated. For instance, it was the neo-Brahmanism which under the Śuṅgas and the Kāṇvas, the Bhāraśivas and the Vākāṭakas early initiated the renaissance in religion, metaphysics, literature and art that focussed national resistance, first against the Yavanas and Kushans and then against the Śakas, Huns, Ābhīras and other foreigners under the Imperial Guptas; in the Pāla Empire the Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna played an important role in the political and cultural expansion of India in the South-east; in the earlier ages the Hīnayāna under Aśoka and the new dispensation of the Mahāyāna under the Kushan Empire were responsible for an outward cultural drive across the Himalayas and the seas.

The fact of the matter is that since the spacious times of Gupta imperialism, the Mahābhārata, the Purāṇas and the Bṛhat Saṁhitā led to an identification of land and culture; while both Mahāyāna Buddhism in the north-west and Bhāgavatism in Middle India favoured the conversion of foreign peoples and their social assimilation. The Indian legists supported the absorption of foreigners by the definition and nomenclature of

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fresh Kshatriyas and Śūdras through the fiction of genesis and proliferation of "mixed" castes by interbreeding (śaṁkara). The divine society of the Vedic pattern was of course sullied and weakened by the recognition of mixed castes comprising the foreigners. But the piety and devotion which Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism evoked fortified the Indian people against exotic influences. The spread of Bhāgavatism as the pre-eminent religion of the whole of India saw also the compilation of many new Smṛtis in consonance with the social conditions. Culture came to be regarded as a more potent binder than race; and Indian nationalism, even when provoked by the oppression of foreign rulers and social substitution, was hardly sullied by any racialism as in Europe.

The Assimilation of Foreigners

The Purāṇas and Epics, Kāvyas and Praśastis, rituals and pilgrimages not merely fostered a sense of cultural and political unity of Bhārata but also embraced foreigners within the Indian scheme of life. In a significant passage the Mahābhārata, Śāntiparva, enjoins Vedic duties and rites for the Yādavas, Kirātas, Gāndhāras, Tushāras and Pahlavas residing in the dominions of Aryan kings so as to facilitate their absorption into the Brahmanic culture. Patañjali speaks of the Yavanas and Śakas as Śūdras but relegates them outside Āryāvarta; while Manu looks upon the former as degraded Kshatriyas who had become Śūdras. The Śakas also came to be designated as Kshatriyas from as early as the first century B.C. The Śakas and the Yavanas (i.e. the Persians from the early centuries of the Christian era) became Hinduised and were fond of assuming Sanskrit names. The various Purāṇas and Smṛtis also encouraged the process of social absorption with greater or less liberality according to the age and social milieu. The Vāyu Purāṇa which is generally regarded as the oldest of the extant Purāṇas and was compiled between the fifth century B.C. and the fifth century A.D. makes the Śūdra and the Ājīva (artisan group) the offspring of extra-Varṇa connection, and yet the social importance of the Śūdra is well recognised. The Śūdras, it is mentioned, number twice as many as the Brahmans in the urban population and after the accession of the Śūdra Prince Mahāpadma (referring to the first Nanda) "all kings are Śūdras." (Vāyu Purāṇa, 93, 66.) The

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Śūdras, along with the Vaiśyas and the women are enjoined to listen to the recital of the legend of Dakṣa-Śiva conflict from the Brahmans for winning a place in the Rudra heaven. In India the real sources of Dharma were the Śrutis and Smṛtis, the two eyes of the Brahman legists, as was aptly observed by Bṛhaspati, society being ruled with the maturity of Indian civilization less by the Vedas and more by the Smṛtis representing traditions and conventions (samayāchāra). The latter took precedence over the Śrutis and enormously multiplied especially from 400 A.D. to 1000 A.D., their number according to Nīlakaṇṭa being 97. Where opinion differed, what was reasonable was to be accepted according to Vyāsa, or the majority view should prevail according to Gobhila, or again both courses were permissible according to Devanabhaṭṭa. It was this flexibility that led to the overruling of the Vedic injunctions from time to time as the social situation demanded. This was strengthened by the doctrine that the Smṛtis differed in authority from age to age: Manu was the authority for the Kṛta age, Gautama for the Tretā, Śaṅkha-Likhita for the Dvāpara and Parāśara for the Kali. Medhātithi, the commentator of Manu, observed that it was futile to present a complete list of the authoritative Smṛtis, for in future new Smṛtis will be composed and will command authority on their own merits. The compilation of about a hundred Smṛtis and the elucidation of the early authoritative works were stimulated by the influx of foreign peoples from age to age and the need of their assimilation into the social organisation. Thus society had constantly to give recognition to new social conventions and practices and modify old ones. The most striking instance of this is the compilation of the Devala Smṛti that addressed itself to the urgent problem of reconversion of the Hindus converted under duress to Islam. Neither Manu nor Gautama nor Parāśara had dealt with the issues brought to the fore by the conquest and proselytising activities of the Muslims. The Devala Smṛti established new principles and practices in respect of the converted Hindus including abducted and pregnant women. The supremacy of the Smṛtis was largely due to their adaptation to the spirit and temper of new times and to the identification of the land with the culture and Dharma rather than with race or any elite class. The Smṛtis were indeed invaluable implements of Indian culture providing a

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canonical sanction to its ever-renewed process of absorption of both congeries of foreign stocks and races and primitive ethnic groups outside the pale of Hindu society.

Many were the theories and fictions of miscegenation (varṇa-śaṁkara), of non-observance of the social code in crises (āpad-dharma) and of the Iron Age (Kaliyuga), which the Purāṇas and the Dharmaśāstras elaborated in order to facilitate the compromise between adherence to the ancient metaphysical scheme of the four varṇas according to culture, learning and character, and the admittance into the Brahmanical society of the Mlechchas or foreigners and the semi-Hinduised artisan and aboriginal groups. The identification of jāti and varṇa and emphasis of the principles of birth and heredity for the upper castes were themselves the indirect results of the entry of exotic elements, aided by the Smṛti fiction of śaṁkara or intermingling of varṇas to which was attributed the origin of numerous "mixed" castes in the social order. The Kushan and Gupta ages, which saw a profound change in the social composition, advent of foreign hordes on a vast scale, and shift in occupations and professions, were indeed particularly fertile in sociological theories of the structure of the human community, varṇa, caste, vocation, stages of life and types of marriage, recognising or promoting cultural and social assimilation of "barbarians" and backward peoples. On the other hand, the new-comers, coming as they did from uncultured, semi-civilized stocks, were anxious to assume Indian names and obtain an entry into the rich and glorious heritage of Indo-Aryan society and religion. Even such fierce warriors and conquerors as the Yavanas, Kushans, Śakas and Huns vied with the Hindu and Buddhist princes of older lineage in showing their zeal and piety for religious endowments to Buddhism and Brahmanism on a lavish scale and even for proselytisation in North-western and Western India.

Indian Metaphysics and Cultural Synthesis

Cultural synthesis is the keynote to history in a land characterised by a variety of races, languages and levels of social development. Religion, art, morals and social institutions through the ages are judged in India by the measure of their contribution to social amity, peace and assimilation. Metaphysics here is not only knowledge but also the art of yoga of attainment

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of supreme status and dignity of self, which becomes at the same time the unbounded extension of self, and perfect equality and solidarity of the human community. Vast and serene ontology supplies the broadest norms and myths, art motifs and symbols that promote the integration of peoples and the synthesis of Indian culture from age to age, and illumine every sector of life. These give the true meaning to the social values, traditions and movements that constitute history.

India has little history, or has at least few historians, if we take history in the sense usually given to this branch of knowledge in the West. One such historian is Kalhaṇa, the author of Rājataraṅgiṇī written in the 12th century. The Rājataraṅgiṇī must be regarded as a work of scientific history not merely for the author's "examination of the charters of the former kings, the consecration of temples, the laudatory tablets and (the colophons) of literary works" in order to eliminate errors as far as possible, but also for his unbiassed and impartial scrutiny of both the good and evil qualities and actions of his ruler, Harsha of Kashmir. Besides, he emulates "the divine perception of the poet, resembling Prajāpati" in reconstructing the bygone age and making it vivid to the eye. Kalhaṇa refers to as many as eleven works of former scholars, comprising the chronicles of kings which he scrutinised. But, if history in the orthodox sense is scanty in India, there are few ancient peoples in the world that have left such abundant and authentic records of what they thought of their gods, heroes and such godly, historical personages as Śrī Krishna, Mahāvīra and the Buddha; what moral ideals they cherished in their myths of the Avatāra, the Jina and the Bodhisattva; and what their kings Aśoka, Samudragupta and Harsha as well as the nobles and the elite wanted themselves as well as the common people to seek and achieve in their edicts and inscriptions. The Purāṇas, Tantras and Smṛtis were written from about the first century B.C. to the 18th century; the former lay down social and ethical norms and embody the dreams of life, love and death; the latter establish law, custom, culture and social gradation against the irruption of exotic ideals. Literature, both sacred and profane, poetry, song and dance speak of the joys of love as well as of wisdom and renunciation, and express the entire gamut of human feelings and sentiments without reserve or squeamishness from the most

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burning sex love to the tenderest spiritual yearning and of experiences from the adventures of roués and courtesans to the political intrigues of ministers and rebels and the orgies of the Kāpālikas. Often does Indian literature match opposites, sexual delight and insight, enjoyment and withdrawal, in mirroring the true rhythm of life. Art is anthropomorphic, clear and serene as well as cosmic, agitated and mysterious, offering the vital clues to human and superhuman passion and compassion. Whatever it is, it expresses the collective aspirations of an integrated community, not the subjective whims and caprices of individual artists.

Four Dominant Myth and Art Complexes Fashioning Culture Patterns

It is not difficult to trace the intellectual and philosophical movements together with the myths and faiths in the icons, motifs and procedures of art from age to age. One of the earliest extant sculptures of India (3rd or 2nd century B.C.), that of the Buddhist cave monastery at Bhājā in the Western Ghats, depicts Māndhātā, the archetype of the ancient pious king, the suzerain of the three worlds, and conqueror of the Gods, Asuras and men, seated triumphantly on an elephant of colossal dimensions. He looks down upon the whole earth covered with tiny figures of falling creatures under a tree uprooted by the elephant, and in another representation rides on a chariot over the bodies of the vanquished Asuras. There is also depicted Uttara Kuru or the Northern Continent, the early home of the Indo-Aryans, later on considered as the Elysium, where the Great Conqueror finds his ultimate abode and where reside all happiness and beauty along with complete freedom from desire. There revel here joyous couples, a king with his court, musicians and dancers, and a vast assemblage of people with the Tree of Wish-fulfilment in the centre. In the myth of Māndhātā the ancient Hindu conception of the Rājarṣi and the Buddhist conception of the Bodhisattva find an interesting fusion, derived as both these were from a common spiritual heritage. The bas-relief magnificently illustrates the basic Ṛg-Vedic conceptions of the victory of Righteousness (Deva) over Evil (Asura), of the falsity of the world of appearance and enjoyment (Rūpa, Māyā) and of the bliss of the eternal kingdom of righteousness and non-attachment (Svarga). It is

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like a work in brush rather than in stone, and envisions the earliest Indian classical world-interpretation—the view of nature as a "world of fleeting and deceptive appearances", of the supremacy of the forces of goodness over those of evil, and of the way of wisdom and renunciation as the way to immortality; while the proliferation of countless minute living forms that rise like thin, evanescent clusters of bubbles from the formless, undifferentiated cave-rock—the matrix of the phenomenal world—symbolises the supreme mystery of creation.

In the paintings of Ajanta, we find the celebrated Mahāyāna Buddhist world-interpretation that captures the heart of India for the first seven centuries of the Christian era. Here the beauty of the world, the sweet love and charm of woman, the joy of the senses, the happiness and suffering of man and the radiance of the Bodhisattva, are all juxtaposed scene upon scene and treated in gorgeous colours and majestic rhythms. These cover entire walls and leap to the ceilings, pillars and sides of rocks at all possible angles as if in a dream-universe with its innumerable aerial pavilions, fairy gardens, forests and skies. Space here is multi-dimensional and time is eternal, linking the past, present and future lives of man and beast by the law of pan-Karma which binds all, including the Buddha. In this palpitating dream-universe even the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas and their great compassion are phenomena, empty mirages. The world in Mahāyāna metaphysics ceases to exist in Nirvāṇa, and, in fact, like the illusory snake in the rope it never existed. It is because the Mahāyāna absolute idealism made no distinction between Saṁsāra and Nirvāṇa, and reduced them both to shadow and magic without any real nature, that Indian art could reach a universal quality, exhibiting both an inexhaustible delight in the beauty of human forms and in super-human aloofness and tranquillity. Thus it reached its Golden Age, its motifs and methods guiding art in other countries of Asia.

Another striking world-interpretation emerges about the 7th century A.D. from the doctrine of metaphysical bi-unity in Tāntrikism. This still dominates religion, art and ritual from the latest great period of Brahmanism. The classic theme of the enterplay of Śiva-Śakti, Puruṣa-Prakṛti, Nārāyaṇa-Lakshmī and Avalokitesvara-Ṭārā now appears again and again, variously inflicted, in the monuments of art. Nirvāṇa and Saṁsāra, eternity

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and time, the dual aspects of the Absolute, now appear in the forms of the God, pure, unconditioned and quiescent, and of his consort Mahā-Śakti-Māyā, the dynamism of time and the primordial life-energy and manifestation of the universe. A significant variant is the triune, cosmic image in mid-India: Maheśa as the serene, self-absorbed Soul (Tat-puruṣa) or as dynamic Time (Mahākāla), the Dreadful Destroyer, licking blood from a plate, constitutes the middle head of the sculpture with the images of Aghora and Vāmadeva or his consort, Mahāmāyā, the Enchantress, looking at her own eternal charm in a mirror, on his two sides. The processes of Creation by Mahāmāyā and of Destruction by Mahākāla, both in the universe and in the living individual, are completely annihilated in the eternal rest of the Absolute, represented by the middle figure. Out of the polarities of the masculine and feminine principles, Śiva-Śakti, Unity in Duality, spring all the distinctions of elements, attributes and relations in Saṁsāra. Thus does Primal Mahāmāyā, the sportive or destructive and maternal or protective, feminine aspect of the Absolute and of the self hold the secret to both knowlege of the transcendental and acceptance of the life of desires and the changing flux of the phenomenal world. Śakti is at once the inaccessible supernal Essence and the concrete world and its illusion; she is Life, both universal and individual; she produces and is both enjoyment (bhukti) and salvation (mukti). To the man of knowledge Saṁsāra or Māyā-Śakti is and is not. Like the morning mist on the Ganges, Saṁsāra rises from, passes and fades into the solely real, the Great Mother.

The fourth world-interpretation, though dating from early Krishna-Bhāgavatism and the expounding of the Bhakti-yoga in the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Bhāgavata and Brahmavaivarta Purāṇas, dominated art and literature, morals and manners in India from the 14th to the 18th century. This stands against the view of the world and relations as illusory, but regards these as true and real modes of manifestation of the energy (śakti) or sport (līlā) of Bhagavān (Krishna), who creates the universe out of his own power as Māyā, and yet in his own nature is beyond it. Painting now becomes more important than sculpture, revealing as it does the complex and subtle nuances of individual moods and mystical experiences, and in fact pools its resources with those of lyrical poetry and music in the folk schools of the Deccan,

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Rajasthan and Himachala. Painters, musicians and poets abundantly reveal with a bewitching and serene loveliness, the joys and yearnings of the human soul in union or separation in the background of the love-play of Radha and Krishna on the banks and pastures of the Jamuna and the penance of Śiva and Pārvatī in the Himalayas. Nature in its procession of the seasons and of day and night, the world of birds and animals, and the delights, sorrows and destiny of man, are all seen in the ideal, supra-sensible setting of a ceaseless dramatic communion between the human and the divine in which one is as necessary as the other. In Bengal the intense spiritual raptures of Chaitanya enthralled the scholars, kings and common people alike and stimulated a deep religious movement for more than two centuries grounded on free and unritualistic kīrtana of the divine name and the brotherhood of all castes. The East Indian School of Vaishnavism is a most vivid illustration of the use of artistic symbols and sensuous imageries, gorgeously delineated in kāvyas, nāṭakas and champūs and reiterated in kīrtanas for the human participation, in a vicarious mood, in the mythical love sports of Krishna in Vṛndāvana, inspired by the Śrīmad-bhāgavata, the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa and the Gīta-govinda. Thus again do metaphysics and myth of a particular epoch govern through art and its treatment of woman, Saṁsāra and nature, the sentiments, ideals and experiences of the common man.

Interpretation of History in terms of Myths and Art-motifs

In India such myths of world-interpretation, Upaniṣadic, Buddhist, Tāntrika and Bhāgavata, have not worn out nor lost their majesty and charm, but are interiorised as man's faith and conscience through art, symbol, ritual and manners. These varied strands of metaphysics comprise the legacy of ages, a complex, viable blend that shapes the rules of life and the virtues of the common man of India. It is her dominant myths and metaphysics, speaking through art, that are responsible for the unity, continuity and true pattern of Indian civilization.

The implicit ontology of Indian culture has become different in different periods, but art and the ethics of social action changed without social chaos, thanks to Indian toleration. It was only Buddhism, due to its monastic celebacy and its denial of the Brahmanical theory of Ātman and of the social postulates of

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a Divine Society and Varṇāśrama, that was in some measure a recalcitrant, uncompromising element. Yet Buddhist myth and art did not fail to react on Brahmanical society and culture. The entry of the slaves and serfs and the depressed castes, including the Chāṇḍālas and Pakkushas, into the Buddhist fraternity contributed to lessen the rigidity of caste barriers and encouraged equalitarian tendencies. Buddhism promoted a spirit of other-worldliness and asceticism against the scholasticism, scepticism and growing materialism of the age, and gave a new stimulus to the democratic organisation and procedure of the Saṁgha, working, of course, on the foundations of the Vedic Sabhās and Samitis. Such democratic practices as vote by ballot, securing of a quorum and appointment of a presiding officer were carried over from the heretical religious congregation to the various village and functional self-governing institutions in the country. It was thus that the Buddhist emphasis on social equality and repudiation of the Brahmanical varṇa had its repercussions outside the field of religion and metaphysics. Again, the Buddhist acceptance of the older myths of Karma and transmigration instead of being a blighting influence stimulated people to good deeds and the winning of the fruits thereof. This was due to the Buddhist Jātaka legend and art that vividly brought home to the common people the links of the Buddha's chain of good deeds through a long succession of births in the eternal pilgrimage (saṁsāra), the life, sorrow and sorrowlessness of creatures. Buddhism interpreted Karma as the absolute, eternal, all-embracing principle of righteousness in creation which is above Brahmā, Vishṇu and Śankara. By his stress on the absoluteness of the moral law, Gautama rescued religion from "hearsay", superstition, the accumulation of mantra and magic, penance and merit, fear and ritual adoration of power, and renovated it as the faith in "the great reality of goodness", the revelation of the moral grandeur of man. Buddhism was uncompromisingly opposed to Brahmanical rituals and animal sacrifices that had become too elaborate and costly for the common people. While its stress on the straightforward and positive Noble Eight Way of Morality (Śīla) that could be adopted by laymen and monks alike and the directness and honesty of its psychological teaching accessible to all through insight and experience (the Buddha's Doctrine means, Come and See), commended it to the masses,

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they were no less attracted by the institution of the Buddhist Saṁgha and its new spirit of equality and brotherhood that constituted a courageous challenge to the Brahmanical system of caste. "My law is a law of grace for all", said the Buddha. The religion of universal love (metta), compassion (karuṇā) and sharing had also its special appeal for the enslaved, the oppressed and the under-privileged for any age, especially for one marked by the glaring contrast of opulence and misery and by the social chaos and suffering associated with the Mauryan empire-building and fall of the sub-Himalayan tribal republics.

The emphasis on universal benevolence and compassion in the later Mahāyāna phase of Buddhism introduced into the Indian social world a new humanism and ardent spirit of sharing and service, and into the whole field of Indian literature and fine arts a new human sensitiveness, if not emotional exuberance, modifying the intellectual rigours of the classical canons of art. This trend was perhaps promoted also by the fluidity and admixture of races and change of social conditions and national temperament. Aśvaghoṣa and Āryaśūra, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti, all more or less show vehemence of passion and luxuriance of imagination that are in sharp contrast with the majesty and serenity of Vālmīki and the seriousness and restraint of Bhāravi and Māgha. Indian art under the Mahāyāna inspiration presented for the first time in world art not only perfect symbols of the moral dignity of man but also the loveliest visions of human tenderness and compassion, inspired by Aśvaghoṣa's Buddha Charita and Āryaśūra's Jātakamālā, two of the most popular books of Asia. Mahāyāna Buddhism with its human tenderness and passion, indeed, introduced into the poetical works of Aśvaghoṣa and the Buddhist sculptures of the first centuries of the Christian era that new note of sensuousness, emotionalism and artistry which ushered the Golden Age of both Indian literature and art. And the spread of Indian culture to Greater India was possible only because of the instrumentality of India's glorious art and literature. The Saddharma-puṇḍarīka (about 200 A.D.), a marvel of mixture of religion, metaphysics and poetry, which shows a marked affinity with the Bhakti-yoga of the Bhagavad-Gītā and sets forth the compassion of the Buddha for the sorrow of the world, became the Buddhist Bible of half of Asia. Buddhism within a few centuries became a world

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religion and the torch-bearer of Indian culture in Central and South-eastern Asia because its spirit was so akin to the changing social world in the continent. Its new theism and ardent spirit of devotion and self-surrender, assimilated from the Vaishṇava Bhāgavatas, Pāncharātras and Śaiva Pāśupatas, had a great appeal with the vast numbers of foreigners and mixed peoples in Gāndhāra, Kashmir, Udyāna, Kuchi and beyond. Its emphasis on the piety and active righteous living of the layman was opposed to the narrow puritanical outlook of the monk, but invaluable as the spiritual mainstay of the complex urban civilization that sprang up in the world's great highways of commerce and cultural interchange. Its tolerance, rationalism and tender humanity, its shedding of the social and institutional frame-work of caste, priesthood and ritualism of the parent culture, and the sincere, non-esoteric and public aspect of its worship eminently qualified it for its universal mission. The Buddhist Saṁgha was also a dynamic, democratic agency of proselytisation and humanitarian service among the lowly, the ignorant and the superstitious. It ceaselessly toiled not only for teaching foreign and backward peoples a new piety and code of conduct, but also for transforming and substituting their popular faiths and observances without the sacrifice of the essential Buddhist myth and doctrine. Buddhist morality, art and literature, new to an uncivilized world, and invested with a rare mystery, loveliness and sensitiveness with the incorporation of the elements of reverence, wonder and Messianic compassion and vicarious suffering of the Mahāyāna, made the success of Buddhism in foreign lands immediate and spectacular.

The common features of the classical-Brahmanical, Buddhist, Tāntrika and Bhakti myths were, however, far more culturally significant than their differences: all laid stress on the eternal and universal character of the Real Man and the unlimited extension of the Divine Community. Reacting amidst the lush bounty of the earth against the transience and futility of Saṁsāra, man sees the Cosmic Self or Person as the Supreme Reality, the perfect expression of human freedom, communion and goodness. The Indian man's endless enlargement of the boundaries of the self and society into the Cosmic Whole or Infinity has been a potent social-historical force in the integration of different races and cultures in a land characterised by great complexity and

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heterogeneity in its social composition. His ascent from the empirical self to the Cosmic Self, the carrier of supreme and absolute status and the creator and judge of perfect order, is inspired by an impersonal, cosmic mysticism rather than by the image and worship of the personal god, and this in Brahmanism, Buddhism and Tāntrikism alike. Thus does India's cosmic sense determine the fundamental unity of the pattern of worship and the true meaning of individual and social goals in the pattern of culture, subordinating desire (kāma) and wealth (artha) to the cosmic order (dharma) and all to enlightenment (mokṣa), and, in the realm of knowledge, the subordination of politics, ethics and aesthetics to grandiose metaphysics and subtle logic.

Art as the Expression of the Soul of India

Cosmic religion, grand ontology and spiritual myth could invigorate, inspire and impel a whole people in India because of her great art. It is the authentic art which has expressed and consolidated the spirit and conscience, the serenity and tempo of the people from epoch to epoch. Largely because of the glorious, imperishable art that has inspired, exhorted and educated them, Indian civilization survives. For art stands behind what humanity dreams, strives and suffers for; art alone is eternal and indestructible amidst the chronic tumult of history.

Indian art has written in chisel and brush the whole history of Indian civilization. Through the successive epochs, classical, Buddhist, Jain, Purāṇic Hindu, Tāntrika and Bhakti, art logically and happily transcribed the myths, values and norms of goodness of the people. Then as the Indian man reconciled Buddhism and Brahmanism in the bosom of the Mahāyāna and the Tantrayāna, art works, whether Buddhist, Brahmanical or Tāntrika, and whether in India or Greater India, became alike in spirit and pattern. Art became less hieratical and emphasised formal values more, overstepping the narrow boundaries of creed, myth and dogma. This happened during a period, covering the 6th to the 13th centuries, almost synchronous with the Muslim advent and final domination. In India art, metaphysics, religion and literature are all intertwined through the ages and only a synoptic treatment can bring unity into the historical process. The essence of the sociological method is to build up the history of cultures of the Indian peoples in terms of art-motifs and

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patterns, myths, religions, literatures and schools of Smṛti that, indeed, reveal the vital movements of social and spiritual life rather than the changes of dynasties and kingdoms. These latter usually left unaffected the real life of India that went on smoothly and serenely in her cottages, temples and sabhās.

The Secular Culture State under Akbar

More than five centuries separate the Muslim occupation of Sind (712-743 A.D.), which hardly touched India politically, from the establishment of a strong and compact monarchy embracing the whole of Hindustan by Iltutmish (1210-1236) and the subjugation of the most easterly Sena kingdom of Bengal (about 1199 A.D.). The South as far as Madura was ravaged and devastated by Kafur (1306-1312) not before another three quarters of a century. Yet another two centuries and a half elapsed before the overthrow of the last powerful southern kingdom, Vijayanagar (1565 A.D.). But India's genius for synthesis embodied itself in the political field in the South during a life and death struggle in the development of a Hindu-Muslim composite state in the medieval Muslim kingdoms of Gulbarga, Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Golkunda and in Bengal under the Husain Shahi and Sur dynasties. The ideal ultimately migrated to Agra and Delhi, and won the support of the Imperial Moghuls. The stability of the Moghul Empire rested on the recognition of two principles, one political and the other socio-religious; both, indeed, of ancient Maurya and Gupta lineage. The political principle was paramountcy, combined with a loose central control and delegation of responsibility of administration to semi-independent kings, chiefs, and caste, guild and village assemblies. This was eulogised by the Arthaśāstra, the Mahābhārata and the Śukra Nīti and by the national bard of the Gupta age, Kālidāsa. The second principle was religious liberalism and tolerance in a culture state. It was the bigoted ruler, Aurangzeb, who tried to build up a theocratic Muslim state in opposition to the secular national state of Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan. The Moghul Padshah-cum-Ghazi thus went against the *modus operandi* of Indian empire-building as well as of socio-cultural integration and synthesis.

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Bhakti and Sufism as Bridges between Hinduism and Islam

For full five centuries since the Muslim conquest (14th to 18th centuries) there grew from strength to strength the Bhakti movement under the stimulus of that celebrated religious leader and reformer, Rāmānanda, one of the greatest that India has known. This waxed strongest during a century of Moghul peace and toleration, and found a happy concord between militant Islam and idolatrous Hinduism. Both Bhakti and Sufism were catholic, egalitarian movements that broke up the exterior shells of Hinduism and Islam, penetrated into the real, common core of mysticism and welded together the two communities, especially the lowest strata of both. To treat Bhakti as a kind of political and social escapism, a flight from Muslim subjection, as is sometimes done by the English historians, is to miss the social impulsion of a country-wide mass movement which, true to the genius of Indian civilization, abolishes the barriers of caste and creed, dogma and ritual, form and etiquette. On the contrary, it represents India's characteristic way of combating the religious and social challenge of Islam.

The common man of modern India imbibes through Bhakti the entire heritage of the mystical, ascetic and egalitarian movements from the ancient Upaniṣadic seers, Mahāyāna patriarchs and Krishna-Bhāgavatas to the medieval Nāthas and Siddhas and the great leaders of the Religious Reformation from Rāmānanda, Kabīr and Nānak to Jñāneśvara, Nāmadeva and Chaitanya. India's time-honoured appreciation of the immanence of the deity has broken through a rigid monotheism, sacerdotalism and caste and achieved at once a religious and cultural integration. During Muslim domination, India under the Bahmani kings and, again, under Akbar Padshah and his two successors, anticipated the modern political pattern of a secular state, and under the tradition of Rāmānanda the modern social ideal of a casteless community.

The above is inner integration that has stood the common people in good stead under great suffering, misery and humiliation during the several centuries of foreign rule. It will serve in the future democracy as the most efficacious means of social and economic levelling when it is broadened and assimilated with the modern egalitarian, socialistic and humanistic trend. The

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Gupta Empire has bequeathed to modern India not merely many administrative institutions but also the Indian scheme of life, myths and morals. Gupta culture was the apogee of a free, powerful and prosperous country's political and social vision, so majestically affirmed by Kālidāsa. It is too often forgotten that the period of Indian freedom covering about thirty-seven centuries far eclipses that of subjection for six centuries and a half in medieval and modern times, when, of course, powerful, autonomous Indian kingdoms also arose as centres of revival. Gupta culture also supplied to India in subjection the seeds of that Krishna-Bhāgavata mystical movement which bearing a rich harvest in the subsequent centuries not only bridged the deep chasm between Hindu ritualism and Muslim bigotry but also saved the people from social conquest coming in the wake of political subjugation. But the Bhakti movement of medieval India had also its political repercussions. It was the contemporary currents of freedom, toleration and syncretism of Bhakti that fostered the zeal of Akbar for Din Ilahi and Dara Shukoh's defiance of dogma and ritual and their fruitless efforts towards building up Hindu-Muslim unity in the Moghul state. To Nānak, Arjun and Govind Singh, India owes the formation of a church nation that successfully challenged the might of the Moghul Empire. The rise of Maratha nationalism is also due perhaps more to the saints, Jñāneśvara, Ekanāth, Tukārām and Rāmadās, than to Śivājī. Similarly the mystic poets Mīrābāī and Narsinh Mehta fed the national movement of resistance in Gujarat, against both the Moghuls and the Marathas.

Two Millenia of Indianisation of Middle and South-Eastern Asia

A civilization is perhaps better tested in prosperity than in adversity. It is the same genius of the Indian people for cultural integration and synthesis that explains the unique pattern of her adventure, colonisation and Indianisation for about two palmy millenia. The Indianisation of South-east Asia shows in particular some of the most significant syntheses of Hindu, Tāntrika and Buddhist cults not met with on Indian soil. India, unlike most colonial powers, has given her Dvīpamaya counterpart the best of her talent, culture and social form.

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During about two privileged millenia Indian culture steadily and effectively spread to Central Asia, Turkestan and China beyond the Himalayas, and to "Dvīpāntara Bhārata"—a nomenclature used in the Vāmana Purāṇa—across the Indian Ocean until this movement was interrupted in the north-west by the occupation of Khorasan, Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia by the House of Ghazni at the beginning of this millenium, and in South-eastern Asia by the Arab incursion into the Indian Archipelago in the 15th century. Roughly speaking, the Indianisation of Middle Asia was vigorous for a thousand years from the patronage of Buddhism by the Indo-Greek rulers (c. 150 B.C.) and the rise of the Kushan Empire (78 A.D.) to the rise of the kingdom of Ghazni (962 A.D.); while in South-east Asia this was in progress for about twenty centuries from the colonisation of Ceylon by Prince Vijaya (483 B.C.) to the entry of the Mahommedan Arabs into Malayasia and the conversion of twenty states into Islam (15th century). No wonder that even from the 3rd century B.C. the boundaries of Jambūdvīpa or ancient India, Chinese Shintup, comprised a large portion of Western Asia over which the Mauryan culture and the might of the Imperial Mauryas left a deep impress. The Greek geographer, Ptolemy, also included within the boundaries of India the entire trans-Himalayan region from Kandahar to Balkh, comprising within it Bactria, Badakshan, Afghanistan and Baluchistan, which until the advent of the Arab Muslims were completely Indianised. The account of the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien (399-414 A.D.) shows that beyond the Tarim basin in far off Shan Shan and the Tartar countries Indian books and the Indian spoken language were used. Buddhism was thriving in Shan Shan, the Tartar-land, Karashahr, Khotan, Kashgar, Udyāna and Gāndhāra, and the Indian borderland, with its numerous monasteries and monuments, enshrining the incidents of the Buddha's past lives, became a second holy land of Buddhism. Six centuries later (about 1030 A.D.) Al-beruni of Khiva mentioned in his Indica that Khorasan, Iran, Iraq, Mosul and the country up to the frontiers of Syria were Buddhistic. Khotan, on the eve of the Muslim conquest (about 1000 A.D.), recorded impressive numbers of Buddhist establishments. Buddhism crossed the Hindukush and spread to Bactria, Oxiana and Turkestan in the first centuries of the Christian era, and thus its

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influence in middle and Western Asia must have lasted about a whole millenium. Under India's stimulating influence each new colony of trans-Himalayan and Insular India, borrowing and assimilating the religions, myths, art patterns, legal codes and even the institutions of caste and priesthood of the mother country, developed a fresh distinctive culture and enriched the pan-Indian heritage.

India's Peaceful, Evangelising Role in World History

Not merely have these glorious chapters of Indian history been neglected, but the impulsion of India's propagation of her faiths, beliefs and institutions, from Cyrenaica to the Phillippines and from the borders of Siberia to the Indian Ocean, has also been sadly missed. Hardly in the history of world civilization is there a more shining instance of the expansion of culture in its evangelising, educative mission without either political violence or economic exploitation of the less advanced peoples. The nine "sea-girt" islands or territories of Bhāratavarṣa (Nava vedā) were, in the words of the Vāmana Purāṇa, "sanctified (kṛtapāvana) by the performance of sacrifices, by war, by trade and other cultural activities" of Indian teachers, Brahman and Buddhist monk-missionaries and colonists. In the celebrated Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta Parākramāṅka of the middle of the 4th century A.D. we read that Siṁhala or Ceylon and "all islands" (sarvadvīpāḥ), referring obviously to Dvīpāntara-Bhārata, brought presents to the Emperor, tendering their homage (ātmanivedanam) to the Samrāt or Chakravartī Mahārājādhirāja of Bhāratavarṣa. Similarly the eulogy about King Chandra, sometimes identified with Chandragupta II Vikramāditya, mentions that "the breezes of his prowess still perfume the Southern Ocean." Thus peoples were peacefully and silently lifted to a higher level of civilization over a vast portion of Asia comprising one-half of humanity.

India's right and duty to play her due role in South and East Asia have been disregarded not merely by a false rendering of Indian history, but also by the British Indian Empire sealing all the north-western and north-eastern land routes, and forcing upon her both political and cultural isolation from the rest of Asia. Indian expansionism has been born of her sense of the unity and interdependence of all life, of her religious conceptions of the Universal Man and the Universal Community, and of her

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political doctrine of a Universal Culture State. India's approach to politics has been essentially metaphysical. The Free India of today reclaims and asserts her right in world history to spread her culture and civilization and to unite peoples in goodwill, love and solidarity, symbolising the spirit of Universalism that she has steadfastly stood for during four thousand years of her history.

The Indian Philosophy of History

Indian historiography, as embodied in the Purāṇas and Itihāsas, has developed the notion of cultural cycles or four world-yugas or great eons with their rhythms of human perfection and degeneration, covering endless ages in the fathomless deeps of the stellar void, with their infinite phantom worlds and endless suns. Brahmā the Creator succeeds another Brahmā in each of these countless worlds, now dark, now illumined. The endless movement of the worlds with their lives, humanities, heroes and gods, according to the law of the eternal Becoming, cannot be told. The Indian cosmogony is strangely akin to the new cosmogony of modern science. But the Indian rhythmic philosophy of man's destiny breathes a patience, serenity and hope not to be found in the European philosophies of history. In India the triumphs of history do not engender pride and excitement; nor its defeats, anger and humiliation. Thus did this most ancient and mature civilization of the world calmly and clearly judge the vicissitudes of Time and history without excessive optimism or pessimism. Prosperity and power brought it no agitation; subjugation and disaster, no despair. The defeats of man and the lapses of culture or Dharma were but interludes in the slowly rotating cycles of the good and evil. The wise men of India attach themselves to neither the good nor the evil. The wheeling play of the Universe, Life and Humanity is symbolised in India by the Dance of Śiva—the Eternal as Ever-becoming. The birth and death of suns and the rise and fall of peoples and cultures are the swaying gestures and movements of Śiva's cosmic dance. India (as Eternal Mother or Prakṛti, contemplating and knowing herself) waits and broods as she watches the rhythm and balance of Śiva Naṭarāja dancing in the full cycle of Time—dancing in the process of history, in the heart of man.

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CHAPTER II

THE GEOGRAPHY BEHIND CIVILIZATION

The Country—From Sapta-Sindhu to Bharatavarsa

The vast sub-continent of India was known in the past as Bhāratavarṣa, the land of the Bhāratas, bounded on the north by the Himalayas and by the ocean in the south. It formed the southern part of Jambū-dvīpa, a designation applied to the central belt of Asia outside China, which came under the influence of the Mauryan Empire, and over which the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas sought to establish political and cultural suzerainty. The name India was first applied by the Achaemenid Persians to the region watered by the Sindhu, called Hidhu (in the Behistan inscription) or Hendu (in the Vendīdād). The Hafta-Hendu or the Sapta-Sindhu, referring to the region of the seven streams of the Sarasvatī (or five streams of the Sarasvatī together with the Ganges and the Jamuna), was the term used for India in the Zendavestā. Darius, the Persian king, who conquered a large part of the Indus Valley between 519 and 518 B.C. gave the name Hi-du or Hindoo (Sind) to this country. Sind for two centuries remained a part of the Iranian Empire extending from Egypt and Asia Minor to Gāndhāra and the Indus Valley. The Greeks, calling the river Sindhu 'Indos', subsequently borrowed the term from the Persians. In the Meher Yasht and Yasna of the Persians we actually find the word Hindu in place of Hafta-Hendu, indicating the extension of the name to the land beyond the territory of the Indus. Herodotus, the famous Greek historian, applied the term 'Indos' to the satrapy of the Persian Empire, but gradually what gave name to the best known province was extended to the whole country by both Greek and Roman writers. In the Bible the term Hoddu was adopted. Since the introduction of Buddhism into China in the first century A.D. the Chinese used the term Tien-chu or Chuan-tu (both from Sindhu) for India; but after Hiuen-Tsang the

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term Indu (Yin-tu) came to be in vogue there. Hindu in Persian, Indos in Greek, Hoddu in Hebrew, Indus in Latin and Tien-chu in Chinese are all corrupt forms of Sindhu. Thus the descendants of Bharata (Bhārata-santati) were known as Indians or Hindus. "Hindu", says I-tsing, "is the name used only by the northern tribes, and the people of India themselves do not know it." The first definite mention of Bhārata as a region (janapada) is to be found in Pāṇini who lived about 700 B.C. It is only one out of 22 janapadas specified from Kāmboja to Magadha, all in Northern India. The Buddhist literature subsequently speaks of seven Bhārata regions (Sapta-Bhāratas) corresponding to the ancient Sapta-Sindhu. Ārya-deśa and Brahmarāshṭra were other names of India mentioned by I-tsing. Āryāvarta was also another ancient name given at the time of Patañjali (150 B.C.) to the northern part of India lying between the Himalayas and the Pāriyātraka or the western part of the Vindhyas. On the west it was bounded by the Ādarśavalī or Aravalī and on the east by the Kālakavana or the Rajamahal Hills. The traditional demarcation of Āryāvarta, according to Vaśiṣṭha, Baudhāyana and Manu, is represented by its association with the natural habitat of the black antelope (Krishna mṛga). The black antelope apparently stands symbolically for Vedic sacrifice or sadācāra, in which form, according to a myth, it travelled all over the land, being followed by Dharma. In the same period the name Bhāradhavasa or Bhāratavarṣa was also current, being used in the well-known Hāthīgumphā inscription of Khāravela, king of Kalinga (about 28 B.C.). The Smṛti literature from Baudhāyana and Manu popularised the name of Bhāratavarṣa extending its frontiers to the two oceans on both east and west. It was in the Imperial Gupta epoch that the Purāṇic literature gave the greatest currency to the term Bhāratavarṣa, a geographical and political conception of the country under one paramount sovereign with the country of the Yavanas in the west and that of the Kirātas in the east. The name of the epic, the Mahābhārata, is politically significant in so far as it sings the praises of the Kurus, descended from the Bhārata line and celebrates the extension of their imperial authority over the whole of Bhārata. From the sacred dynasty of Bharata we owe the fame of the great land called Mahābhārata. The Mahābhārata itself is the story of the sacred origin of the descendants of Bharata. Before Bharata and his

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descendants the country was called Himāhva-varṣa or Haimavata-varṣa. Thus observes the Mahābhārata (Chapter 73, Ādiparva)

"Bharatāt Bharatī kīrti yenedaṁ Bhāratam kulam
Bharatānām mahat-janma Mahābhāratam uchyatey."

Hindustan or Hind was the name used for Northern India in the medieval period, the name being first used by Babar in his Memoirs.

Contrasts of the Geography of the Asian Steppe and the Indian Plain

The geography of India presents marked contrasts with the geography of the Asian mainland. It is the contrast between the Central and Western Asian steppes and the Indo-Gangetic plain which is the key to Asian nomadism, invasion and conquest, on the one hand, and the antiquity and continuity of Indian riverine civilization, on the other. The Himalayas have made India as well as her history. By robbing the monsoons of their moisture, the Himalayan wall has made the Indo-Gangetic plain a vast, well-watered garden, swarming with population, and the regions in Central and Western Asia arid or semi-arid wastes, inhabited by the world's most forcible, roving races. Between Central and Western Asia and the plain of the Indus intervenes a vast single plateau comprising Iran, Afghanistan and Baluchistan. On the north-eastern corner of the Iranian plateau a network of mountain-ridges and river-threaded valleys facilitates descent into the warm and prosperous Indian plain. If the Himalayas by contributing towards the vivid contrast between the barrenness and bleakness of the Central and Western steppes and the prosperity and supineness of the plains of Hindustan have been responsible for the historic pressure of hardy, war-like foreign invaders, Eastern Irania provides remarkable facilities of movement across mountain passes and river valleys. This is due to the mountain ranges of Afghanistan abruptly ending and offering an easy access to the basin of the Oxus (Bakshu of the Purāṇas) in the Hari Rud valley (traversed by the armies of Alexander of Macedon) in the west and also becoming very narrow just north of the head of the Kabul river that flows eastward into the Indus.

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India's Vulnerable Frontiers in Eastern Irania

There are several historic routes of movement and invasion of the Indian plain across Irania. First, the Hindukush, the Niṣādha range of the Purāṇas, is pierced by the two mountain passes of Qara-Kottal and Dandan-Shikan (near Bamiyan), that connect Western Afghanistan and the Hari Rud valley (ancient Sarayū) with Balkh (ancient Bālhīka) where the high roads to China and the Mediterranean converge, and facilitate the eastward movement towards Kabul. Gigantic statues of the Buddha (one of them being 159 ft. high), overlooking the "magnificent plateau" that blessed generations of Chinese and Central Asian pilgrims to the holy land of Buddhism, and greeted Hiuen Tsang in the 7th century A.D., still stand at Bamiyan, the capital of ancient Kāpiśa at the foot of the Hindukush. From Bamiyan through the Khyber Pass the invaders could come down the valley of the Kabul (ancient Kubhā) river to Peshawar. Secondly, from Ghazni (whence Delhi was ruled for about two centuries), the Tochi valley similarly leads towards the Indus valley through the Kurram Pass. Two other minor passes are the Tochi and the Gomal. The Kurram and Gomal rivers are the Krumu and Gomatī and the Zhob tributary of the Gomal is the Yavyāvatī of the Ṛg-Vedic Aryan migration. The easy Tochi-Kurram line was at least one of the routes used by the Indo-Aryan invaders. The Khyber route also was certainly used since the Kabul and Swat rivers are mentioned in the Ṛg-Veda under the names of Kubhā and Suvāstu. Thirdly, from the Helmand basin the route lies from Herat or Seistan to Kandahar along the Arghanadab (Ṛg-Vedic Sarasvatī) to Kabul or south-eastward through the Bolan or Mula Pass into the lower Indus valley. The Khyber and the Bolan, together with the three minor passes of the Kurram, the Tochi and the Gomal, comprise the well-known Five Fingers—natural routes of communication connecting Iran and Central Asia with India. Fourthly, in the historic period the Makran coast route in Baluchistan connected the delta of the Indus with Iran. Between Kabul and Kandahar a series of valleys and mountain passes offer several ways to the Punjab frontiers. The two most strategic points on the Indian frontier, Khyber and Bolan, are thus laterally connected with each other.

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Both the valley of the Kabul (ancient Gāndhāra, Greek Gāndāritīs) and the lake-land of Seistan (ancient Śakasthāna), into which the Helmand flows, have been the two principal spring-boards, just as the Khyber and the Bolan have been the two principal routes of the great invasions of India for well-nigh three millenia. The borderland, Eastern Irania itself, with its great high roads across the passes of the Hindukush and the Hari Rud valley on the north and to Persia and the Mediterranean region in the west, has been the historic shelter of displaced or intruding war-like races and peoples, ever anxious in this rocky and inhospitable environment to swoop down through the defiles to the plains of India. Once a martial people were well established over a considerable part of this strategic, difficult and intricate mountain belt, they could effectively command the Indian plains below and the surrounding terrain, and no superior power from the plains could dislodge them from this position of vantage. On the other hand, they would yield to the cumulative pressure of the tribes of the Central Asian steppes that issued recurrently in devastating hordes from the cramped plains of the Oxus and Jaxartes and would begin to spread south-eastward to the plains of the Indus which always offered temptation. The peaceful tenor of life of the Punjab and Western India was recurrently endangered by these strategic and racial factors.

The Strategic Importance of Balkh, the Distant Bastion of Indian Defence

It was only the Maurya and Kushan Empires of India—the first through the effective occupation of Eastern Irania, and the second through the occupation also of Balkh and Sogdiana up to the Jaxartes, Pamir, Kashmir, Tibet and Chinese Turkestan—that forestalled for a few centuries the avalanches of turbulent races perched on these strategic mountain fastnesses. The Kushans, though they embraced Buddhism and extended their territory in the Ganges valley, looked upon Central Asia as their real home, and built a second holy land of Buddhism in Gāndhāra, the Emperors residing mostly in the cool heights of Kashmir, Kāpiśa and Peshawar. Even though it was only the Imperial Mauryas, Kushans and perhaps also Guptas who could extend the boundaries of their empires to the Hindukush, the latter

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always remained the ideal "scientific" frontier for all Indian empires, not excluding the British.

Like Eastern Irania the fertile oasis of Balkh or Bactria is of considerable strategic importance for the empires of both Persia and India, and indeed, constitutes their outer bastion of defence. It was from Balkh that the tribes of the Indo-Aryans, the Achaemenids, the Bactrian Greeks, the Pahlavas or the Parthians, the Śakas, the Yueh-chi or Kushan clan of the Mongolian tribe, the Ephthalite Huns and the Western Turks successively came down south of the Hindukush and thence through the valley of the Kabul to North-west India and the Punjab—evidence of the constant historic pressure from the North or the West through the centuries—and established their kingdoms in the fertile plains of India. In ancient Indian literature the "Śakas, Yavanas and Pahlavas" were lumped together as outlandish and fierce (dāruṇa) barbarians who have found their new settlements in India. The Huns who later came on the scene in Balkh and Iran from the steppes of Central Asia devastated some of the most flourishing regions of the Gupta Empire in India and the Sassanian and Roman Empires in the West. There is an irresistible southward impulsion of the hardy races of Central Asia, often driving the previous occupants before them, first towards the fertile plain of the Oxus and then towards the warmer, more fertile and richer plains of the Indus and Western India. India, therefore, has no single vulnerable frontier line, but a series of frontier belts from the valleys of the Oxus, Jaxartes and Helmand to those of the Kabul, Swat, Tochi and Gomal rivers, each with its distinctive physical features and human note from Balkh to the Kabul valley and the Seistan lake-land.

The Great Frontier Fortresses of India

Both Bactria and Eastern Irania have indeed shown cyclonic activities in history with their repercussions upon the entire Aryan world. The ancient Balkh-Khyber thoroughfare south of the Hindukush across the valley of Kabul is one of the greatest high roads in the history of India. In the valley of Kabul just before the Khyber Pass and Gāndhāra (the territory from Kabul to Rawalpindi) are entered there was situated on this road at the confluence of the Kunar and the Kabul-rud the ancient fortified city of Nagarahāra (modern Jalalabad), which thrived for

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about a whole millenium and is famous for its remains of numerous Buddhist stupas, monasteries and grottoes of the Kushan period. On the Indian side the Khyber Pass had the ancient city of Purushapura or Pushkalāvatī (the Peukelaotes of the Greek geographers), the capital of the Indo-Greeks and the Kushans at its mouth, connecting India with Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia. On the great northern highway of Khyber (the Uttarāpatha) also lay the ancient city of Taxila with the Indo-Greek city of Sirkap and the Kushan city of Sirsukh. These are among the most famous cities in the history of Asia. Not far down from Taxila is the ancient city of Śākala, known as Sangala to the Alexandrine geographers, later on a most important seat of the Indo-Greek kingdom and civilization. Śākala along with its numerous Buddhist monasteries and stupas was destroyed by the Hun king Mihiragula, who afterwards chose it as his place of residence.

The hoary antiquity of these north-western cities will be evident from their mention by Pāṇini and Patañjali as crossed by India's northern overland trade-route (the Uttarāpatha) which joined up with the Chinese and Mediterranean route at Balkh. The cities mentioned by the famous grammarians were Vālhīka or Vāhīka, Kāpiśa, Pushkalāvatī, Maśakāvatī, Takshaśilā and Śākala. The Vāhīka villages mentioned by Patañjali include Ārāt, Pātānaprastha (Pathankot), Śākala, Kastina and Nandipura, some of which are on the high road from the Jhelum valley to the north-western gateway of India. Alexander's historians also refer to the strong Indian fortifications of the frontier cities of Maśakāvatī, Varana and Pushkalāvatī. The Indian geographers called the Hindukush Parvata-upa-Niṣādha (whence is obviously derived the Greek Paraponesus) and the Pamir was the Paripatra, both being regarded as parts of the Himalaya in its western extension. North of the Khyber route, the Hindukush splits up into a series of spurs with river-threaded valleys and passes. On the Malakand Pass in the valley of the Swat that feeds the Kabul river stood the ancient fortress of Maśakāvatī (Massaga of the Greek geographers and Mashaknagar of Babar's Memoirs); Aornos (Varana of Pāṇini), equally fortified, stood on the spur of Una between the Swat and the Indus; Pushkalāvatī (Pushkarāvatī or Utpalāvatī) stood at the confluence of the Swat and Kabul rivers (modern Charsadda, 17 miles

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north-east of Peshawar). All these frontier routes along with Nysa (sometimes identified with Nagara or Nagarahāra or Dionysopolis of Ptolemy between the Kunar and Swat valleys) were previously defended against and captured by the invading army of Alexander of Macedon (who had to use military engines to batter down their stone walls and ramparts), which moved farther on to Taxila and Śākala. In the scheme of Mauryan imperial defences the Uttarāpatha with its capital Taxila was made the frontier administrative province. The defence system must have included Maśakāvatī, Varana and Pushkalāvatī as the great frontier fortresses of India—a vivid appreciation of the strategic importance of the narrow valleys and passes of the Hindukush (dvāraghāts of Pāṇini) giving access to the Khyber road or to the Indus, north of the Kabul river in Gāndhāra. From the time of the Buddha to the Hun invasion more than ten centuries later Takshaśilā was of course the greatest and most flourishing frontier city and one of the cosmopolitan cities of Asia. Takshaśilā or Taxila was the capital of Gāndhāra, the seat of "a marriage market" of the Babylonian pattern, as found by the Greeks, of the viceroyalty of Aśoka during his father's reign and of an ancient university which attracted students from different countries, an emporium of Asian commerce and a focus of the Romano-Buddhist civilization. Towards the south is the Bolan Pass which connects India with Kandahar and Herat (ancient twin Alexandrias), Seistan (Śakasthāna) and Iran, and is now protected by the fort of Quetta. It was in the valley of the Helmand that the Śakas, who had their original home in Central Asia whence they were displaced by the Yueh-chi, and who then swept over the Greek territory of Balkh, found their new home. The valley of the Helmand had since then been called Śakasthāna. Thence they issued, through the Bolan route, for their gradual conquest of the Indus valley and Western India, and at the beginning of this millenium this part of India was called Scythia by the Greek geographers. Their conquest of Saurāshṭra, Gujarat and Malwa enabled them not only to penetrate into the Ganges basin up to Mathurā by bypassing the desert, but also with the assistance of a powerful navy to defeat the Śātavāhanas and annex the famous Konkan ports on the Arabian sea for reaping the benefits of the Mediterranean trade. Some scholars identify Śaka-dvīpa with the Indus delta, occupied for some

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centuries by the Śakas. Such are the north-western gateways of India, to which converge the natural routes from the eastern Mediterranean, Iran and the Hari Rud and Helmand basins, the steppes of the Oxus and Jaxartes, and Khotan, Turkestan and China, and which have played a dramatic and decisive role in Indian history and civilization.

Ancient Fertility and Wealth of the Borderlands

In the past the north-western borderlands of India were much better watered than at present. The entire north-western 'ante-chamber of India', comprising Afghanistan, Bactria and Eastern Irania, has experienced oscillations of climate, causing rhythms of invasions in and from that region. Balkh in the north where the great routes from China, India and Western Asia met, and Las Bela in the south, the ancient meeting place of routes from the Indus delta and Southern Iran, are now ruined cities commanding a desolate region that had once enjoyed an equable climate before the monsoon swerved eastward. Apart from the facilities of invasion and conquest of India, which the genial climate and prosperity of the extensive terrain south of the Hindukush afforded to the hardy races of Central Asia, a significant agricultural result was the probable discovery of bread-wheat in Afghanistan which was nourished by the cyclones of the previous climatic cycle, and became the mainstay of early agriculture in the Indus valley and the Punjab. In what are now the rainless deserts of Baluchistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia, large and flourishing villages have been recently discovered. The north-western routes to India were indeed strewn with fertile and prosperous oases—Samarkhand, Balkh and Khotan—in the midst of deserts of sand and stone. Samarkhand was one of the most fertile oases of the entire region. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang says that "its soil is rich and fertile, all kinds of grain thrive here; the vegetation of the forest in magnificent and there is marvellous wealth of flowers and fruits". Balkh or Bactria was also one of the best cultivated and prosperous oases. "The plains and adjacent valleys are unusually fertile. It is indeed a favoured land," observes the Chinese pilgrim. Kāpiśa was also agriculturally no less rich. Lampaka produced rice and a large quantity of sugarcane. Khotan was similarly prosperous with abundant plantations of mulberry

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and was the chief centre of silk production, a national industry —the gift of the region to Chinese culture. The Punjab and the entire Indus basin a thousand years ago obtained, no doubt, the benefit of the heavy monsoon rains of spring and early summer that today give an equable climate and agricultural prosperity to the Ganges valley. There has been a marked climatic change in the whole of the dry Afrasian region, which was favoured by the south-western monsoon currents in the previous centuries. The Chinese pilgrims, Fa-Hien and Hiuen-Tsang, testified to the large population and wealth of the entire region from Kashgar, and Khotan to Udyāna, Gāndhāra and Bhīda in the Indian borderland. Even beyond, Kuchi and Turfan were remarkably prosperous and important states of Central Asia—fertile oases in the Gobi desert and guardians of the ancient civilizations of India and Iran in Central Asia right up to the beginning of the Turko-Afghan conquest. Gāndhāra, Udyāna, the Swat valley, and Takshaśilā, the metropolis of the Punjab, all had a more genial climate and prosperity even in the 7th century. As late as the 14th century excessive and violent monsoon rains led to the loss of Timur's cavalry at Multan. A more favourable climate than at present in Western Asia, including North-Western India, proved an advantage to the roving and displaced tribes and folks that wanted to penetrate into the plains of Northern India. As the monsoon left the north-western borderlands of India from Balkh to Baluchistan, the valley of the Indus also became dry and was thinned out in population; the Sarasvatī of Vedic literature meandered and became extinct; and a vast desert slowly extended itself between Southern Iran and Rajputana. In the later centuries this became the natural barrier that deflected the invasions through the Khyber gateway towards the Delhi corridor, and prevented the eastward advance of the Arabs after their conquest of Sind at the beginning of the 8th century. South Baluchistan became dry and arid even by the time of the campaign of Alexander the Great in the 4th century, but Sind was then fertile and moist. Conditions of aridity and desiccation first asserted themselves in the Indus delta and then extended north-eastwards. The Indus basin together with the various settlements, linked by the great rivers, suffered from the consequences of the decisive climatic change. The great ancient river, the Sarasvatī, on whose banks Vedic culture grew, and

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which was still a mighty stream at the time of the Mahābhārata, suffered decline and capture. She later on became the Ghaggar-Hakra which became moribund and dry in the middle ages, its skeleton remains being now found strewn about in Gurgaon and Bahawalpur. The decline of the Sarasvatī-Ghaggar-Hakra-Nīra system led to great ups and downs of ancient settlements in the Punjab beginning from those belonging to Harappa culture. The ruin of Harappa itself was due apparently to the meandering of the Ravi on which it stood. There have been shiftings of the courses of the Sutlej and the Ravi, particularly of the former. An open riverless area between the Sutlej and the Jamuna called the Sirhind gap also developed which not only facilitated movement through the north-western gateway to the plains of the Jamuna on the east, but also made Delhi the central city of Hindustan strategically situated at the point where the Indo-Gangetic plain becomes most constricted and, therefore, most suitable for defence against aggression from the north-west.

The "Marga" of the Indo-Aryans

Through the north-western passes have come from the earliest ages migrating peoples, traders, pilgrims as well as invaders, into the Indian plains. At the dawn of history came the very dark Negritos, and then the proto-Australoids, who spread over India, Further India and Melanesia before the fourth millennium B.C., and who are now represented by the Veddas of Ceylon, the Andamanese, the Irulas of the Nilgiris, the Panyers of Wynad and several other forest tribes. Next came the brown Mediterranean race which produced the civilizations of Egypt, Sumer and the Indus valley and whose representatives now occupy parts of Chota Nagpur, the Deccan Plateau and Southern India. Then came the Aryan-speaking peoples, who spread along the river plains of Northern India and also penetrated into the South. The successive waves of the Negrito, proto-Australoid, Mediterranean and Aryan-speaking peoples have followed the routes of the rivers and open valleys, eastward and south-westward, eastward to the Ganges delta and south-westward to Gujarat and Bombay. The Aryans' long route through Iran, Kāmboja and Gāndhāra to the Sapta-Sindhu and the Ganges-Jamuna doab was beset with difficulties, conflicts and vicissitudes. The "Way" or "Road" (mārga) accordingly came to

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symbolise man's spiritual direction, progress and discipline among the Āryas. The eightfold mārga of Buddhism is dhamma itself; while for Brahmanical culture mārga is the righteous way of living enjoined by Manu (āmanoḥ vartman). Such is the time-honoured significance of the metaphor derived from the ancient migrations of the Indo-Aryans. In the course of their wanderings high mountains, such as the Himalaya, Sumeru, Kailāsa and Vindhya, were regarded as the favourite abodes of gods, angels, Yakshas and saints in India. Sumeru is considered as the central axis of the universe. Himalaya, "the king of mountains", is the very embodiment of the souls of the gods (deva-ātman). Vishṇu or Śiva is his name in the poetry of Kālidāsa. Kailāsa is the abode of Kubera, the king of the Yakshas, and of the divine yogi Śiva and his consort Pārvatī.

Mountains and Rivers in Aryan Cosmography

Near Kailāsa is Mānasa-sarovara in the very heart of the Himalayas, the source of the Sutlej (Śutudri) and the mystic reservoir of the life of the universe. The Aryans mingle metaphysics with geography. The Padma Purāṇa compares the universe to a golden lotus. In the Aryan cosmography the Lotus of the Universe has its seed-vessel in the Mānasa, whence issues the Sutlej, and which is not far from the fountain-heads of the Indus, the Brahmaputra and the Ganges. Brahmā, the Progenitor of the Universe, has his seat in the World-Lotus of Mānasa. The structure of Asia is conceived as a four-petalled lotus, the highest peaks of the world comprising the upturned petals, and the Indo-Gangetic plains with the sub-Himalayan tracts forming the southern petal turned down upon its stalk on the cosmic waters. The cosmic Lotus or Padma is worshipped in the Ṛg-Veda as the Padmapriyā, "the goddess to whom the lotus is dear", as the earth (Kṣmā), and as "the mother of created beings". In Basarh (3rd century B.C.) and Bharhut (2nd century B.C.), we find the image of the same Ṛg-Vedic goddess. The lotus has from the most ancient times become a universal symbol in Indian religion, sculpture, architecture and literature. The most sacred river of India, Gaṅgā, has her celestial birth from the high heaven of Brahmā. Thence she flings herself down upon the matted locks of the Himalayan snow-god Śiva at Hardwar or Haridvāra (ancient Gaṅgādvāra and Kanakhala), within two

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hundred miles of the majestic waterfalls of the Gomukhī, and gently descends to the plains below for washing away the sins of Sagara.

"Bright Ganga falling with her heavenly waves
Himalaya's head with sacred water laves,
Bearing the flowers the seven great sages fling
To crown the forehead of the mountain king."

The descent of Gaṅgā and Jamuna from heaven to earth and ultimately into the sea was for the first time represented in sculpture early in the fifth century in Gupta India with the revival of Hindu nationalism and the conquest of the Indo-Gangetic basin by the Imperial Guptas. The river Gaṅgā on the alligator (makara) appears on several Gupta coins, while on the doorways of the temples, Gaṅgā on the alligator and Jamuna on the tortoise become very prominent in Āryāvarta since the Gupta period. Similarly the figures of the Goddess, seated on the lion, the tiger and the rhino, viz. Durgā Vindhya-vāsinī (a name we come across in the Mahābhārata) in the Gupta coins, suggest the extension of the Gupta Empire to the Vindhya mountains in the south and the dense forests of the Gangetic delta and Kāmarūpa in the east. The Purāṇic age saw the deification of Gaṅgā and Jamuna, symbols of the midland of India which was the core of the Gupta Empire. Kālidāsa described the river-goddesses as chowrie-bearers of Śiva (Kumāra Saṁbhava, VII, 42), and in a famous passage in the Raghuvaṁśam (XIII, 57) described the confluence of the two rivers at Prayāga, which he likened to the deity's ash-besprinkled body with black serpents as ornaments. At the cave temple at Udayagiri we also see a vivid representation of the birth of Gaṅgā and Jamuna, their confluence at Prayāga, and the mighty flow of the combined streams into Pūrvasāgara. The lyrical treatment of the theme of Gaṅgā-Jamuna in the kāvya of Kālidāsa and the sculpture of the Gupta period does full justice to the holy associations of the mighty rivers in the Aryan Madhyadeśa, which was the spring-board of expansion of the Gupta culture-empire, built up against the incursion of the Huns. The description of the mūrtis of Gaṅgā-Jamuna in Kumāra Saṁbhava (VII, 42) reproduces the features of contemporary sculpture (without the chowries) at Udayagiri, Vidiśā. "Gaṅgā and Jamuna, assuming visible forms and holding

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chowries, served Śiva at that time appearing to be accompanied by a flight of swans." The white chowries waved resemble swans alighting on the river-banks, although the forms of the rivers coursing to the sea have changed. In the magnificent Pāla image of Śiva-Naṭarāja on the bull at Vikrampur, we have also the elegant figures of Gaṅgā and Jamuna flanking the god with waving chowries in their hands. The myth of the descent of Gaṅgā, the celestial stream, has captured the imagination of the country to such an extent that it is a most common theme in the Epics and the Puraṇas and also in sacred vernacular literature. India's largest and most dramatic rock-cut relief extant is that of Gaṅgā in the 7th century Pallava work at Māmallāpuram on the seashore near Madras. Gods, angels, Kinnaras, Siddhas, Nāgas, human beings and animals are all filled with wonder and devout rapture at the descent of Gaṅgā to the earth, brought about by the penance of the pious king Bhagīratha, that rescues life on earth. The multitude of figures—divine, titanic, human and animal—are all integrated together by a swaying, flowing rhythm issuing out of the boundlessness of a colossal rock-frame, reiterating India's vision of the oneness of life. Gaṅgā is the primordial Divine Energy which is the matrix of the universe. Indian art superbly depicts here a cosmical event—the descent of Gaṅgā from heaven and her gift to the Indian world.

The Social Institutions of the Sacred Doabs

The Ganges, unlike the rivers of China, has hardly departed from her main channel. This explains both the antiquity and the continuity of the civilization of the Ganges basin in the fertile fields of which congeries of races and stocks, which have followed the routes of the Ganges and its various tributaries, have intermingled and become assimilated with one another. Mountain-peaks and hill-tops formed familiar landmarks and sacred places of the Indo-Aryans as they journeyed through mountains and plateaus. But as they reached the level, expansive plains, they regarded rivers rather than ridges as their natural boundaries. The holiest rivers of the Aryans, as they settled north-east of the Indus plain passing the Śutudri, were the Sarasvatī, the Drishadvatī and the Apāyā. This region was the holy Brahmāvarta. To the east of Brahmāvarta, the holiest doab in world culture, lay the upper Ganges-Jamuna doab, called the

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Antaravedī, where the Aryans developed the cult of Agni or the Fire-god. The Aryans went forth further east under their priests and kings, causing the Fire-god Agni to burn forests and relish new lands through sacrifices in the fertile plains watered by the lower reaches of the Ganges, the Jamuna and the Sarasvatī and the rivers Sarayū and Vāranāvatī. The Aryan wanderers found in these eastern plains various pre-Aryan races and peoples at different cultural levels with different customs and methods of living. Faced with the task of organising these peoples and producing a stable and efficient social polity without the risks of social antagonisms and outbreaks, the Aryan conquerors, the first kingdom-builders of India on a large scale, developed on the river valleys certain unique social institutions nowhere met with in world history. The Indo-Aryan varṇa (class or caste), village community and joint family system represented an effort to organise a workable social system, based on the autonomy of each community or culture, collective discipline and mutual tolerance. No doubt the well-knit frame-work of caste, the self-governing village community and the joint family played an important historical role as a great contribution to social and cultural stability in a country in which differences of race and standards of culture were apt to provoke perpetual social discord. These functional groups and institutions still secure to the individual members of each social stratum in India the much-needed protection, and this explains why the Brahmanical social structure, which imposes fairly rigid rules of conduct in all phases of human relations, still dominates the life of the people. There are few countries where there is so much of institutional control over occupations and economic life. On the other hand, since culture and economic life are not static, a *modus vivendi* was established under which the tribe and the caste could not disregard the claims to culture and advancement, and the rural community and the family could not overlook the needs of economic progress and individualism. Nothing is truer in India, along with the rigidity of Indian social control, than the plasticity and responsiveness of these very institutions which control man's social, economic and domestic life.

Historical Contrasts between the Wheat and the Rice Belts

It is noteworthy that the dry north-western lands of India,

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which form a part and exhibit the characteristics of the semi-arid pastoral regions of South-western Asia, are the natural wheat-producing regions of the country and the homes of the immigrant races, potentially nomad raiders with a Scythian, Turko-Afghan or Mongol attitude to cultivation. It is in the Indus valley that have originated some important varieties of wheat, barley and lintels as well as domesticated cattle, sheep and goats. The Mohenjo-Dāro wheat is of the species still cultivated in the Punjab, while the barley found there is of the species found in pre-Dynastic graves in Egypt. The continental climate and the quality of foods, wheat and lintels, fruit and meat are responsible for the fine physique, robust health and vigour of the people largely sprung from the forcible, immigrant races of South-western Asia. Wheat farming is individualistic in North-west India and is associated with pastoral industry and a low density of population. The greater part of India—middle, east and south—grows the typical monsoon rice which covers about one third of the crop area in the whole country. If we draw a line from Kathiawar to Kumaon, in the west will be the wheat-growing and in the east the rice-growing region. The wheat belt of India in the west and north-west is the region of race migration, invasion and assimilation *par excellence*. The strong, roving wheat and barley eating races of the Eurasian steppes crossing over the Khyber and Bolan passes have come in large numbers and settled and intermingled here in regular succession. The rice belt of India, the region of the plains, is one of the world's ancient centres of heavy sedentary population, the zone of relative isolation, the focus of resistance against foreign invaders and the seat of far-flung conquests and empires, beginning from the conquest of Agni in the Vedic age and the Dharma-vijaya of Aśoka to the powerful empires of the Guptas, Vardhanas, Pālas and Gurjara-Pratihāras. The dense population of the Ganges valley acts as a huge sponge quickly absorbing new stocks and cultures from the north-west that hardly remain distinguishable. The narrow Ganges-Jamuna corridor, east of the Aravallīs at the entrance of the valley, is the scene of memorable conflicts between foreign and indigenous peoples and institutions. On the whole, the summer drought crop, wheat, and the monsoon crop, rice, are the staple cereals of immigrants and autochthones, new and ancient inhabitants of India respectively. Monsoons

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also encourage a systematic rotation of crops with rice. Grains, beans and pulses, which are largely grown as independent catch-crops, as well as fish serve to modify the preponderance of starch consumption in an essentially rice diet. Rice demands many labourers and minute individual attention from them. It encourages collective instincts and habits due to the need of co-operation for the utilisation and drainage of water. It is associated with the village panchayat government, the collective ownership of meadows and pastures, and a relatively dense population and low standards of living, health and physical condition. Rice cultivation, affording the opportunity for an arranged succession of crops and handicrafts which require great labour, explains the heavy concentration of population in level plains and intense corporate life in village communities and guilds. The contrast between rice and wheat growing is significant not merely in agriculture but also in history and politics. Rice is India's hand-labour garden crop, the mainstay not only of the endurance and home-spun prudence of her teeming millions, but also of the peaceful, settled habits of the thorough-breds of her soils and waters, who have been exploited, expropriated and sometimes even exterminated by the invading hordes of wheat-growers and wheat-eaters from the north-western steppes. For many decades the Moghul courts in Delhi and Agra had to depend for their supply of wheat upon Bihar in the east.

Hindrances of Invasions and Conquests

It is a paradox that racial assimilation and development of caste in India were the outcome of successive drifts of outlandish tribes and peoples from the steppes into the Punjab plains and thence into the Ganges-Jamuna basin. Invasions are hindered by the difficulties at the north-western and northern gateways—the Karakoram, Malakand, Bamiyan, Khyber, Gomal and Bolan passes; and by the desert of Rajputana (marusthalī of the Purāṇas). The great desert not only blocks movement through the Bolan and Mula passes, but extending to the north-east for 400 miles also deflects movements through the Khyber Pass towards the narrow corridor of 150 miles between the desert and the Siwaliks, north of Delhi, that could be stoutly defended before the invaders could reach the very heart of Hindustan. Delhi, perched on the primeval Deccan rock that divides the

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plains of the Ganges from the plains of the Indus, and overlooking the corridor from the vital southern flank of the Jamuna, is pre-eminently the geographical capital of India. Natural barriers also divide Hindustan from the Deccan and separate the coast regions of the east and the west from the interior of the peninsula proper. Due to the rise of fortified cities, and of historic states and principalities along the principal rivers, foreign invaders could not "occupy" effectively the great plains even after successful military expedition and conquest.

The great populousness of the Indian plains from the early period, to which the Greek writers testified, not only prevented easy conquest and occupation but also promoted assimilation and admixture. The invaders mostly could not be reinforced from any base that they had left far behind in the north-west. The success of the Aryans in Āryāvarta was presumably due to their constant replenishment from Asia Minor and Iran, and of the Afghans, Turks and Moghuls due to their common loyalty to Islam and iconoclastic zeal. Neither the Iranians, nor the Parthians, nor the Greeks, nor the Pahlavas derived large and steady reinforcement from their rear in the trans-Indus region. The continuity of the Śaka domination of Northern and Western India was perhaps due to the proximity of the Śaka race to the reservoir of fresh supply from Seistan or Śakasthāna (formerly Drangiana) whence the Śakas spread to India and Central Asia. The Turko-Afghan conquest of India was facilitated by Sabuktigin's conquest of Khorasan, parts of Central Asia, Afghanistan and the Punjab and the Arab occupation of Sind and Multan, that served as bases of quick-marching expeditionary armies replenished by foreign hordes converted to Islam.

Invasions following usually the Khyber route have been slow and gradual, and often have failed to reach the inner gateway of Delhi or to force their way to the plains of Hindustan. In the great plains rural civilization hardly has been subject to the shock and collision of forces devastating the country from the north-west, while the very gradualness of the invasions and the long period through which the cultural conflicts have been sought to be adjusted have led to integration and exchange, especially as all the invaders have come across a civilization much superior to their own. The country, so vast and so difficult of approach as to be beyond the effective sweep of foreign

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conquests, has enjoyed a good deal of local autonomy in village communities, guilds and assemblies. The vitality and stability of Indian civilization are due to the fact that the social polity of India nurtured her ancient traditions unaffected by the appearance and disappearance of empires, which never encroached upon the rights of indigenous local bodies, caste assemblies and joint families.

Route, Culture and Art

Demolins has developed the fruitful idea that the route, which peoples and races traverse in the course of wanderings in their formative stages, largely moulds their arts of civilization and patterns of living. This is true of patterns of culture, art and religion that form together with social organisation and even metaphysics an integrated experience shaped by the regional factors and forces of the people's route. On the whole the early Indo-Aryan peoples, who have encountered the prairie and the desert in their long pre-historic wanderings, have been infused by myths and visions of the infinite, the universal and the transcendental. The procession of the sun, the moon and the stars in a translucent sky, the passage of the seasons and the long tedious marches across limitless open spaces by day and by night, where nothing intervenes to titillate the senses, arouse the artistic sensibility to abstraction and geometrical regularity. Early European peoples, traversing in the pre-historic period forests and mountains, and with vision constantly circumscribed and at the same time beguiled by trees in broken lands and hills, have leaned more to the mythopoeic and artistic expressions of the finite, the individual and the concrete. The contemplation of the limitless sand-dune and the unobstructed plain in Western Asia and India suggests abstract rhythms and pure geometrical patterns in art. The contemplation of vegetation and broken landscape in the West suggests realistic, imitative patterns and the symmetry of finite, including human, forms. Thus do the generic art forms and patterns diverge, although there must be fusion of styles, as a result of cultural contact, borrowing and assimilation in different epochs. Indian art and literature are more intuitive and mystical, saturated with the sense of the infinitude of nature and of human destiny, and poise and tranquillity of the universe of which man is treated as an inseparable

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part. Occidental art is more realistic and subjective, dominated by the rich interplay of human passions and desires, which determine the treatment of the landscape, and greater sensitiveness to the elegance and subtlety of finite forms of nature and the variegated, albeit fleeting, charm of humanity. The rigidity of lines and crystallisation of forms as well as stylisation in Indian art translate man's inner poise and harmonious adjustment with the universe. The vital lines, the sinuous curves and the delightful rhythmical composition in Occidental art express material and psychological individuality and man's independence of nature that in fact answer to his own moods and feelings. The former strives towards abstract rhythm and structure, the latter towards realism and the derivation of norms of beauty from the transient, accidental and uncertain forms and movements of finite things.

The contrasts between Indian and Western forms and motifs of sculpture are even more clearly marked. Firstly, Indian sculpture, unlike Greek sculpture, does not depend for psychological characterisation upon differentiating modelling and measured modulation of planes of muscle and limb in the figures for lyrical, heroic and anecdotal treatment. The emphasis is on the concentrated vigour of summary modelling and relatively free roundness of outline as well as the rhythm and sweep of movements of all parts and factors of the plastic composition, appropriate for the treatment of what are permanent and universal in mankind, abstract themes, universal values and trasncendental insights, connected with the nature of man's life and destiny and scheme of the cosmos. Secondly, the nature of the matrix is never hidden, but rather governs the form and pattern of figure-sculpture that seems to emerge from within the rock or is set against its flat surface. The universal aspiration of Indian thought after poise and silence is satisfied by the sculptural traditions of heaviness and breadth, and of the most rigorous generalisation of figures that become steeped in or emerge from the silence. This effect is often intensified by the extension of plastic composition to the entire wall of the rock cave and its connection with the adjacent surfaces with furrows and openings carved into the wall as well as unhewn dark corners—an architectonic articulation of the entire three-dimensioned material of which not only the main figures but the entire scene form a part.

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Thirdly, Indian sculpture is saturated with an intense feeling for nature that first embodied itself in Buddhist art depicting scenes of animal life from the Jātakas in the setting of the natural landscape. It gradually developed a characteristically abstract treatment and symbolisation of plant and animal forms, the cutting of their figures in deep relief introducing both vigour and movement. The Indian tradition of representation of natural forms and motifs in the abstract and as a decorative pattern, serving an integral function in architectural design, bears resemblance with the Gothic phase of European art. Fourthly, medieval Indian sculpture in the rock-cut temples is fashioned in the constant, mellow half-light of the cave recesses amidst rows of plain pilasters, and more or less eschews the cheap interplay of chiaroscuro which Western sculpture abundantly exploits for the lines of the silhouette and the differentiated planes of the body, so essential for its realistic figure-representation. This again is responsible for the persistence in India of bas-relief poised harmoniously in the setting of the womb of the rock. It is upon the nature and depth of cutting of the mother-rock, the pilasters and projections from ceilings and other architectonic devices, and the volume and position of the figures in the plastic mass that an essentially abstract art depends for its message of communication of certain universal values as contrasted with the unique tidings of individua personalities and scenes, characteristics of Western figure-sculpture. Indian art speaks in universal accents, is concerned with universal values. It has discovered a technique and procedure which perfectly express the material or rock where it is conceived, created and contained. It depends for its message as much on the urge of the unformed towards its own articulation as on an essentially integral treatment of the plastic mass as contrasted with the Western linear and flat treatment with its succession of separate points and details of relatively trifling, anecdotal significance. Such mode of sculpture, with its stress of breadth, heaviness and roundness of outline and modelling, and dynamic sweep of the whole mass of individual figures to the neglect of unessential, superficial elaboration or manipulation of form, is akin to the methods of reasoning in Indian philosophy and metaphysics. The latter are far less concerned with the course of logical argumentation than with certain broad universal axioms

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and postulates, the most important of which are the realisation of the illusion of the senses and superficial manifestations and the unity and universality of the abstract, supernal essence.

Quest for Continuity and Unity

The boundless Asian steppes and deserts had permanently moulded and shaped the Indo-Aryan psyche. The first Indo-Aryan habitations in India were also in the treeless tracts of the Punjab and the Ganges-Jamuna doab as well as the forest clearings made by the earlier settlers. The influences of the forests that percolated into Indo-Aryan thought, ritual and art through the mediation of the Dravidian peoples, and also directly, instead of making them realistic and sensitive to the elegance and glamour of the finite and the concrete, were, indeed, overlaid, subordinated and made to serve the sense of the infinite, the abstract and the eternal. The vastness of the open spaces and the fecundity of the jungles foster in India notions of infinitude, continuity and unity. The Vedic Aryan conception of the cosmic deity having myriad forms, or of the single metaphysical essence expressing itself in finite manifestations, which became the dominant notion of Indian religion and philosophy through the ages, reflects the expansive Indian habitat. A thousand variety of forms, plant, animal, human and super-human, is juxtaposed together in the bountiful tropical environment, where life not only sprouts and spills on all sides in an orgy of reproduction and destruction but seems to pass quickly and imperceptibly from one stage or level to another. The principle of creation and destruction, of Life and Death became identified in the Indian psyche. This was underlined by the pulse of the monsoon—the dominating factor in the natural environment—bringing either abundance of food or famine, multiplication or death for swarming masses of population in utter dependence on the climate and weather. The Progenitor Prajāpati in Ṛg-Vedic culture is also "Death who enshrouds the earth". Śaivism, which is an admixture of Dravidian and Indo-Aryan faiths, makes Śiva-Paśupati both the generator and destroyer. The ambivalence of Life and Death never wanes in Indian religion and thought.

The Universal Belief in the Transience of Life

Sudden and premature death lurks constantly in the Indian

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jungle infested with aboriginal tribes, carnivores, snakes and insects. The Aryo-Dravidian settlements were mostly distributed along the fertile strips of the great rivers. The most considerable part of the country was originally covered by forest and grass jungle. The forest extended from the western end of the Ganges-Jamuna Doab to the Vindhyas. South of the Ganges from the Aravallīs to Magadha it was also a thick, impenetrable jungle inhabited by forest people. The sub-Himalayan belt of forest and grass jungle extended along the whole length of the Ganges basin and reached much nearer the river as late as the 19th century when Bareilly, Gorakhpur, Darbhanga and Dinajpur were all forest clearings. Much of the eastern and lower deltas of Bengal was also inaccessible in the beginning of the 19th century. The frontiers of cultivation were no doubt gradually extended into the vast stretches of deciduous forests and grass jungles. But colonisation meant many lives cut off prematurely by hostile forest tribes and beasts of the jungle, plagues and diseases. Malaria was throughout Indian history a great scourge. It is probable that the vast prosperous clan country in the Himalayan terai with its important cities, such as Kuśīnagara, Kapilavastu and Vaiśālī, North Videha or Tirhut with its capital Mithilā and Varendra with its cities of Puṇḍranagara and Mahāsthāna, suffered recurrent defeats at the hands of morass, jungle and malaria, and were thrown out of occupation. Out of the insecurity and danger of the jungle environment that both the Dravidians and Aryans had to face during the long periods of migration and expansion in their peasant villages, scattered as sporadic outposts of settlement in the dense forests, has come the Indian all-pervasive, overwhelming sense of the impermanence of life. This conviction, especially stressed in Buddhism and Jainism, still dominates every aspect of Indian thought. "Life is like a transient drop of water flitting on the leaf of the lotus plant", thus runs the famous verse of Śaṅkarāchārya. As early as the Vedic period the formidable difficulties of expansion and settlement in the forest regions were realised, as is evident from the various magical formulae for fighting pests, pestilences, famines, wild beasts and robbers described in the Atharva-Veda, and from the conception of the Indo-Aryan heaven found in the Ṛg-Veda:

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In heaven

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.
Neither shall the sun smite them any more nor any heat;
For the lamp that is in the midst of the throne shall
be their shepherd,
And shall guide them into the waters of life,
And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Dravidian Contributions to Indian Culture and Thought-process

The tangled web of life in the steaming forest has woven in India the fundamental notions of animism, animal guardianship and transmigration, which are the gifts of the autochthonous pre-Dravidian and Dravidian culture to the Indo-Aryans. But the Indo-Aryans refashioned these for moral and social aims. Many Indo-Aryan deities have animal forms and animal vehicles, but these have nothing to do with the older totemism and animal guardian cults of the Dravidians. In the Indo-Aryan view of life man through his good or bad conduct is reborn as a dvija or deva or an outcaste and animal. Out of the warp and woof of Dravidian magic, animism and totemism, Indo-Aryan culture has woven the texture of the laws of Karma and Saṁsāra, a moral interpretation of the myriad aspects of life, universal, continuous and transient with difference only in levels of quality and direction. Man's life and destiny in India are interpreted in terms of vegetative growth—the transience, harmony and succession of forms resulting from the sowing of seeds, tillage and gathering of harvest in a never-ending cycle. One cycle of labour and fruition follows another and the succession is eternal. The Indian man thus integrates his beliefs in the transience of Life, the inviolability of the Law of the Soil and the continuity of Life in Nature, plant, animal or human existence into the master-notions of Immortality and Metempsychosis. Indeed, we first come across the doctrine of Transmigration in the Indus valley civilization—one of the basic postulates and emotional fixations common to all developed faiths and philosophies in India. The beliefs of the primitive Mundari-speaking and Dravidian peoples of India that the binding thread of life runs through all the processes and phenomena of Nature—that "life is the same in person, thing or spirit", Animism, Animatism

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or the Daimonic theory of the universe profoundly influenced the development of religions in this country. These were re-defined and transformed into the theories of Pantheism, Pan-psychism and Pan-karma with their high emotional tones, but invested with a sense of cosmic purpose and destiny in terms of the ascent of life that brooks no boundaries of time or space. The patterns of Dravidian faith thus became the basis of subsequent religious advances as the Indo-Aryan peasant village settlements spread through the vast southern and eastern forests.

The notions of the impermanence and continuity of Life or Saṁsāra, with the cycle of births, rebirths and sorrows, rising or falling from level to level of existence, and of the absoluteness of the cosmic Law of Karma regulating life and destiny in an infinite chain of existence comprise indeed the common background of all religions and philosophies in India. The doctrine of Karma views evolution from the food-gatherers' and peasants' angle of the vegetative rhythm, the sequence of agriculture and the cycle of the seasons in the Indian scene. But in its abstract interpretations given by Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism it holds together life and mind, the present and the past, good and evil, the cosmic and the ethical process in an integrated harmonious whole. By the side of the Wheel of Life in Nature, Indian thought of the classical period sets the Wheel of Righteousness of Man, representing at once the culmination and triumph of the procession of Nature and the perfection and immortality of Man.

Out of the lush bounty and exuberance of the Indian plains and forests have also sprung the Dravidian cults of fecundity, masculine in the form of phallus worship and feminine in the form of worship of the yoni and the beneficent or the terrible Mother-goddess. And, indeed, the discovery that creation and destruction, life and death, emanate from the sexual principle of bi-unity of the Male (Puruṣa) and the Female (Prakṛti) in one probably belongs to the jungles and to the pre-Dravidians and Dravidians. But Indo-Aryaṇ culture reoriented and developed this into the subtle and elaborate metaphysical doctrine of Tantrikism, just as it transformed the Mother-goddesses of the forest-folks, such as Durgā, Chāmuṇḍā and Kālī, into the deities of the Brahmanical pantheon, and the magical rites and bloody

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sacrifices into the offerings of flowers, fruits and cereals in the Indo-Aryan pūjā. Idolatry, image and fetish worship, the magical observance, the spell of mantra and the elaborate ceremonials associated with the seasonal toil and leisure, hope and suspense in agriculture, all came largely from the Dravidians and other indigenous peoples. If the forest and the jungle have given Indian culture elements of magic and taboo, demonology and divination for protection against the uncertain, uncanny and destructive forces of nature and animal life, and the cults of the Earth-mother and the male generator and of the plants and animals, so also have the cultivated field, verdant meadow and well-stocked pasture, responsive to the order and periodicity of nature in a monsoon land, made significant contributions to the abstract thought of Hinduism.

Belief in Cosmic Order and Metempsychosis

The cycle of six seasons in the year, the rhythm of rainfall from the two monsoon currents and the annual rise and decline of rivers so marked in India bring a continuity amidst the seasonal variations of the routine of life and toil, and favour beliefs in the regularity and order of existence, a long scheme of things in the universe and a cosmic binding principle governing every aspect of life, mind and society. The insecurity of life, underlying pre-Dravidian and Dravidian systems of belief and lore, with their fixations of fear, anxiety and abasement, is relegated into the background in Indo-Aryan peasant-village culture; the foreground is occupied with the intellectualisations and symbolisations of order, security and immortality and with the moral definitions of the universe and man's life. The order of the stars in heaven, the sequence of the seasons and the cycles of rainfall, fertility and vegetative growth in the Indian scene become in the metaphysical speculation of Hinduism the absolute Truth (Satyam), Norm (Ṛta) or Law (Dharma) that governs the natural, social and moral order of the universe.

The doctrines of order, immortality, metempsychosis and karma all emerged early in the Vedas, Upaniṣads and Brāhmaṇas, and have since then constituted the essential foundations of Buddhism, Jainism and later forms of religion, mythology, art and poetry. Perhaps the notions of the universality of conscious life and the transmigration of the soul, treated in the ethical

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fashion, could not have taken such deep roots in India but for the fact that this is the habitat of some of the brainiest of animals in creation, such as the ape, the cattle, the elephant, the crow, the parrot and the maina, which come again and again in story and legend to converse with and mingle almost on equal terms with humans and are metamorphosed as human beings in a long, interwoven chain of lives.

On the whole, the region with its even, monotonous landscape, its monsoon pulsation, its rivers with their rhythm of rise and fall, governing the sequence of sowing, ploughing and harvesting and the entire routine of man's economic and social activities, its cycle of the seasons, majestically recurrent like the procession of the Sun and the Moon gods and the planets (the navagrahas of Indian religion and art) in the translucent sky and its troops of domesticated animals—monkey, cattle, elephant, deer and bird—whose lives are interlocked with human lives in a manner not to be found elsewhere, promotes a search for unity, continuity and immortality. These are the fundamental postulates and frame of reference of Indian metaphysics. No foreign race that came and settled in the expansive plains of India could escape from the spell of the basic Indian doctrines of continuity, metempsychosis and solidarity. These account for a mythopoeic interpretation of experience, a poetic insight of the world and man, distinctive of Indian civilization. Indian myth, religion and art introduce into man's life and work an over-tone binding these into a greater universe of Being, making his life a sacrifice, his work a ritual and his relations and experiences the processes of Becoming. The theories of continuity, metempsychosis and solidarity spring from the grass-roots of pre-Dravidian and Dravidian forest cultures, and provide Indian experience with an aesthetic primacy and immediacy. But they are remoulded and overlaid with moral ideas and sentiments as embodied in the norm of individual perfection, immortality and freedom, the absolute law of Karma and the ethos of the unlimited community, characteristic of mature Indo-Aryan civilization, and its deeper understanding of Nature and of Man. On both these diverse strands of world-interpretation are founded the Indian man's endless quest for communion as the only way of Peace and Freedom. Peace in India is not for one, but for the many. The universal prayer in the country is peace not only for the

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individual, but for all fellow-men and also for all sentient creatures, even for earth, water and heaven, in fact for the cosmos as a whole:

"Peace be unto the heaven. Peace be unto the upper ether. Peace be unto the earth, Peace be unto water, Peace be unto herbs. Peace be unto great trees. Peace be unto the God of the Universe. Peace be unto Brahman. Peace be unto All. Peace be unto Peace itself."

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CHAPTER III

THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL UNITY OF BHĀRATA-VARSHA

Identity of Land and Culture

Indian culture obtained its true complexion through the successive epochs of history from the invasions, conquests and settlement of various peoples that came from the Central and Western Asian steppes to the Indian plains. One of the early invaders and conquerors, the Indo-Aryans, took upon themselves, as they occupied the Sapta-Sindhu, then identified with the whole country, the historic mission of establishing supreme political and cultural suzerainty (ādhipatya, mahārājya) over the entire land. From the Āryas, of whom the Bharatas (with which clan the Ṛg-Vedic kings Divodāsa and Sudāsa were closely connected) were the most prominent under the celebrated Rishis Viśvāmitra and Vaśiṣṭha, came the basic Indian ideal that the land was culture and the culture land. In the Śatapatha and Aitareya Brāhmaṇas, "the Bharatas are considered as the exemplars of correct conduct, the knowledge of whose customs is stated to be something which not every one has". With the help of the sages and poets India early developed the cult of the Bharatas with Agni as their god and Bhāratī as the goddess and the sacredness of the rivers Sarasvatī and Drishadvatī. Thus the Bharatas were peculiarly entitled to suzerainty over the whole land for the establishment and consolidation of Brahmanic culture as this early evolved and flourished on the Sarasvatī. This basic conception of the identity of land and culture was strongly reinforced in the spacious times of Gupta imperialism by Purāṇic ideology and institutions. The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa mentions that it was Bharata who renamed the southernmost portion of Jambu-dvīpa as Bhārata-varsha after his own name. Before him the land was called Himāhva-varsha. The building up and consolidation of one state (the Vedic Sārvabhauma ekarāṭ or the

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Purāṇic Rāja-chakravartin of Jambu-dvīpa) on the plains of the Ganges were, however, challenged and jeopardised in successive periods by new invaders and conquerors from the north-west, against whom both the holy Sanskrit culture as well as the holy land of the rivers had to be stoutly defended. But the invasions of this country were never like avalanches sweeping away every state, institution and culture before them. Thus India, in spite of the vulnerability of the north-western frontiers, never developed a kind of racialism or nationalism as in Europe. On the whole, the shiftings of races and conquests were in fact much less evident in the march of history in India than in Europe.

Historical Importance of the Ganges-Jamuna Corridor

Yet the great migration routes of the waterways from north-west south-eastward to the Gangetic basins, and south-westward to Malwa and Gujarat, have seen many invasions and devastations. From the Punjab plain between the Jhelum and the Sutlej to the plain of the Jamuna and the Ganges, the road lies between the desert and the mountains, and is rich in memories of ancient great battles which governed the destiny of Hindustan: Kurukshetra, Thaneswar, Sirhind, Karnal, Panipat. The British army traversed the same track beaten by adventurers, conquerors and empire-builders in previous ages when it conquered the Punjab and again, when it reconquered Delhi from the mutineers of North India in the middle of the 19th century. Advancing from the Hooghly estuary, the British consolidated themselves a century earlier first in Cassimbazar and Murshidabad and then in Patna. Thence they proceeded to Allahabad and up the Ganges-Jamuna doab to Delhi. The annexation of Oudh waited till 1856. Delhi, the central city of Bhārata-varsha, the ancient Indraprastha, the imperial city *par excellence*, the cradle and the grave of successive empires, lies towards the south-east on the same track, the natural site of an imperial capital and the centre of the struggle for empire. He who conquers and rules Delhi, conquers and rules Hindustan. Delhi is the epitome and symbol of the vicissitudes of Indian history. Thus it was no accident that, when the north-west frontier was beginning to show unrest, Delhi was restored as the British Indian capital, with Simla, long the summer capital, looking over the region from the Himalayas; and that the northern division of the British defences was

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distributed from the port of Calcutta, past Banaras, Lucknow, Allahabad, Delhi and Meerut to Peshawar, the garrison city on the frontier; and the southern army through the Bombay and Madras Presidencies and the port of Karachi to Quetta. It was also no strange coincidence that from Delhi it was possible to travel by two routes to Karachi, by two routes to Calcutta; by two routes to Bombay, and thence to Madras in undivided India.

In the case of the first historical migration and conquest of India, it was in the region round Delhi, after the river Sutlej or Śutudri had been crossed, that the Āryas were transformed into Hindus and a distinctive Brahmanical culture was evolved. This region was the doab of the Sarasvatī and Dṛshadvatī, identified in the Mahābhārata with Kurukshetra or Sthāṇutīrtha (Thaneswar) and given the exalted title of Brahmāvarta or "the Land of the Gods" by Manu. Very near the city of Delhi was ancient Indraprastha, the capital city of the epic period; not far from Delhi was also the ancient city of Mathurā at the western end of the Ganges valley, familiar in the Mahābhārata as the home of the Satavatas, the Vṛṣṇīs and the Śūrasenas, and Sthāneśvara, the holy town and capital of the Imperial Vardhanas. Mathurā became important in the Maurya Empire since the fourth century B.C. and was the southern capital of the Kushan Empire in the first two centuries A.D., the focus of Kushan influences and Greek traditions in middle India.

The Ancient Cities of the Ganges

Migrations, conquests and shifts of the river course were responsible for the ups and downs of many cities on the Ganges and its great tributaries. After Hastināpura (in the district of Meerut) was swept away by the Ganges, Kauśāmbī (Kosam near Allahabad) rose to prominence and became one of the most celebrated cities of India, the capital of Udayana Vatsarāja. Other important ancient cities in the Ganges valley were Indraprastha (near Delhi), Ahichchhatra or Chhatravatī (Ramnagar in Bareilly), Kāmpilya-nagara, Mathurā, Mithilā and Champa. A typical class of painted grey pottery unearthed at Hastināpura, Mathurā and Ahichchhatra—the sites of the Mahābhārata—gives clues to the Aryan settlements of the upper Ganges basin going back to anywhere between 1500 B.C. and 1000 B.C. The great cities of the Ganges valley at the time of the Buddha and Mahāvīra

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were counted six in number: Rājagṛha, Śrāvastī, Champaka-nagara, Sāketa (Ayodhyā), Kauśāmbī and Kāśi. Śrāvastī is modern Sahet-Mahet in Bahraich district on the south bank of the Rāptī. Champaka-nagara, the capital of ancient Anga, was a most ancient city situated at the confluence of the Ganges and the Kusi (near modern Bhagalpur). Saṅkāśya, Kānyakubja, Kapilavastu, Kuśīnagara, Pāvā and Vaiśālī were also important cities. Saṅkāśya or Kapitha (modern Kudarkot in Farrukhabad district) was situated on the Kālīnadī about 50 miles north-west of Kanauj. Kuśīnagara or Kuśāvatī (modern Kusinara) and Pāvā (modern Padrauna) were situated on the river Kokustha, and Vaiśālī (modern Basarh) on the confluence of the rivers Rāptī and Gandak. Pāṭalīputra was just a small town at the time of the Buddha, growing into importance due to the crossing of the Ganges and defence against the attacks of the Vṛjjis of Vaiśālī. Under the Imperial Mauryas it grew into the largest city of India, 9½ miles long and 1¾ miles broad according to Magasthenes, and was situated at the confluence of the Sona and the Ganges. Patañjali refers to the city as "Anuśoṇaṁ Pāṭalīputram". In the triangle joining Prayāga, Banaras and Gaya with Ajodhyā, all in the middle Ganges plain (Majjhima-deśa), will be included the holiest cities and shrines of India attracting pilgrims from the vast Indian and Eastern Asian world—followers of Brahmanism, Jainism and Buddhism. This is *par excellence* the sacred land of all Indian religions. When Fa-Hien (415 A.D.) visited the holy land of the Ganges, he was much impressed with the number of very big cities, wealth and population of Magadha. Mathurā was flourishing with 20 monasteries along the banks of the Jamuna. But Saṅkāśya (Sankisa or Kapitha) and Śrāvastī were already in decline. Pāṭalīputra had not the same pre-eminence in the Gupta age as it had in the Mauryan. When Hiuen-Tsang (629-645 A.D.) visited the holy land two centuries later, Kānyakubja or Kanauj and Sthāneśvara were the political capitals of India under the Vardhanas, rich and prosperous with their towers, pavilions, flowery groves and ponds. Mathurā, Banaras and Ayodhyā also were still flourishing. Kauśāmbī, Śrāvastī, Kapilavastu, Kuśāvatī, Rājagṛha and Vaiśālī were all dead cities. But Pāṭalīputra, which after a period of eclipse became the imperial capital of the Gupta Emperors, was still prosperous, though not having the glory and magnificence of the

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ancient Maurya capital. Decadence seemed to have already begun, and the historic capital of Magadha soon became a city of ancient ruins and monuments. At the beginning of the 17th century Finch (1608-11) described Prayāga as "one of the wonders of the East", and Banaras as "the principal mart of Bengal goods". Mathurā, Prayāga, Banaras and Ayodhyā were all large flourishing cities throughout the Moghul period. Patna took the place of ancient Pāṭalīputra and grew into importance under the Sur kings. Kanauj lost most of its ancient and medieval importance. On the whole, while most of the important cities on the main channel of the Ganges retained their pre-eminence through the ages, the peoples and cities of North Pāñchāla or Rohilkhand with its capital Ahichchhatra, North Kośala or Oudh with its capital Śrāvastī, the clan country with its important cities like Kuśīnagara, Kapilavastu and Vaiśālī, and North Videha or Tirhut with its capital Mithilā, have shown great reverses, due to the vagaries of the Himalayan tributaries of the Ganges showing marked changes in their courses, the fluctuations of rainfall, and man's persistent defeats at the hands of morass, jungle, malaria and possibly also earthquake. In the Bengal delta, the capital or commercial cities on the banks of the great rivers have shown even greater vicissitudes, large and important seats of population and commerce decaying in the course of few decades into insignificant villages or being even completely forgotten. The dead cities of Bengal include Puṇḍranagara, Tāmralipti, Kankagrāma, Karṇasuvarṇa, Saptagrāma, Kotivarṣa, Suvarṇavīthi, Gaur or Lakhnautī and Murshidabad.

The Commercial Civilization of Dakshinapatha

Unlike the alluvial Indo-Gangetic plains of the north, the rocky Deccan (ancient Dakshiṇāpatha, Dakhinabades of the Greeks, contrasted with Uttarāpatha or Northern India) is a most stable plateau, geologically constituting as it does one of the primeval areas of the earth. It shows none of the physiographic and agricultural changes associated with the meandering courses of rivers and the ups and downs of riparian cultures. The Vindhya mountains separate Peninsular India, Dakshiṇāpatha, from Northern India, Āryāvarta. Peninsular India had in some respects a separate history independent of the political vicissitudes and foreign influences in the civilization of Āryāvarta.

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The Narmadā, south of the Vindhyas, was the age-long frontier between the kingdoms of Āryāvarta and those of Dakshiṇāpatha—the Maurya and Gupta empires, the empire of the Sātavāhanas, the kingdoms of the Kshatrapas and the Huns and the Vardhanas, and for some decades of the Turko-Afghan empire. Under capable leadership, the east and west coast of India could, however, be integrated as in the cases of the great maritime empire of the Sātavāhanas and the Gupta-Vākāṭaka alliance. The Ganges and Narbada valleys were ancient seats of large population, and were isolated, though not wholly, from each other by the mountains and forests. The ancient road from the North to the South lay from Kauśāmbī and Sāñchī to Ujjain and thence to Māhiṣmatī (Maheśvara) on the banks of the Narbada (as mentioned in the Suttanipāta). From Māhiṣmatī the road lay across the river through Nāsikya to Bharukachcha on the Arabian Sea. Hiuen-Tsang took this route. Another route ran to the Deccan from Māhiṣmatī to Pratiṣṭhāna (modern Paithan in Hyderabad) on the Godāvarī. This was probably the traditional route of Agastya and Rāmachandra when they entered Daṇḍakāraṇya. The Deccan was also connected by the sea-route with the Indus delta and Western Punjab, which were once gardens and held many ancient Buddhist stupas, almost down to the mouth of the Indus and the ancient Brahmanical cities of Brahmanabad and Tatta, as well as traces of foreign occupation, Sassanian, Śaka and Arab. Sind came to be cut off from the main currents of Indian life recurrently for long periods, and was also the channel of penetration of Western commerce, Roman, Arab, Portuguese and British, into the Deccan.

Between the major cultural divisions of Uttarāpatha and Dakshiṇāpatha there was a brisk interchange. The ancient highway from Kāmpilya and Mathurā in the Western Ganges basin ran through Vidiśā (Bhilsa) and Ujjainī and crossing the Narmadā at Māhiṣmatī proceeded south-westward to Pratiṣṭhāna and thence to the great western ports of Sūrpāraka and Bharukachcha (Broach) through Nāśikya (Nasik); another route from Ayodhyā and Kauśāmbī in the middle Ganges plain ran through Bharhut in Baghelkhand (120 miles south-west of Allahabad) and crossing the same river at Jabbulpur (Javalipura) ran southeastward to the Godāvarī and the Krishna basins. Sāñchī (Vidiśāgiri) and Bharhut on these ancient routes from the North to the

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South were focal points of the distribution of Indian culture up to the Gupta period to the Indian Peninsula. Sāñchī, Vidiśā and Ujjáinī were meeting places of Sātavāhana, Śuṅga and Indo-Greek cultures and then became important centres of Gupta culture and art. The later Vākāṭakas and the Chālukyas inherited the Gupta legacy and transmitted the Gupta art tradition to Ajanta and Ellora. From Ajanta and Ellora before long the Chālukyas took it to Badami near the southern boundary of the Maratha lava area. From Magadha by way of Oudh an ancient Mauryan route ran to the Godāvarī valley. Thus the culture of the Ganges valley reached Amarāvatī, the capital of the Sātavāhanas on the Krishna, whence it crossed the Pūrva-sāgara for the East. Buddhism flourished there for several centuries under the Sātavāhanas and their successors. The influences of the art of Gāndhāra and Mathurā, reaching the Deccan through the key positions, Sāñchī and Bharhut, at the junction of several highways, are writ large in the sculptures of both the Western cave temples and the Krishna-Godāvarī valley. The centrality of Sāñchī and Bharhut is, indeed, reflected in their sculpture occupying an intermediate position between the clarity and severity of Mauryan-Kushan art of Mathurā and Sarnath and the exuberance and vitality of the paintings of Ajanta and the sculptures of Amarāvatī. Similarly the later efflorescence of temple architecture and sculpture in Khajuraho, Chhattisgarh, Gwalior and Mahoba bears the impress of the combination of Central Indian and Kaḷingan styles. The Rajputana desert, the Maratha lava as well as the broken terrain that intervenes between the valleys of the Ganges and the Godāvarī, and that now hides the remnants of some of the oldest inhabitants of India—the Gonds in the Central Provinces and the Dravidian and Munda-speaking tribes in the Chota Nagpur plateau—are the triple barriers between Āryāvarta and Dakshiṇāpatha. But the Malwa plateau gives access to the Deccan from both the Indus and Ganges plains; while the ridgeway from Nasik to Golconda is connected through Sāñchī and Ujjain with the Ganges basin. It is along these corridors that the main stream of early Indian civilization flowed from the land of its birth to the Deccan. These were also the routes of Moghul conquest and Maratha expansion in the later centuries. The ancient strategic sites on the way to the Deccan are Ujjain, Nasik (Nāsikya, well-known from the Maurya-Scythian

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times), Pratiṣṭhāna (Paithan on the banks of the Godāvarī in Aurangabad), Tagara (Ter or Thair) and the ports of Vaijayantī (Vanavasi in North Kanara) and Kalyāṇa. The road also leads to the east towards the Godāvarī-Krishna delta with the important eastern port of Dharaṇīkoṭa, Dhanakaṭaka or Masulipatam. It starts at Mārkinda in the Ajanta hills, proceeds through Daulatabad, Pratiṣṭhāna and Tagara and meeting another road from Vinukonda, south-east of Hyderabad, runs to Mahasala (Masulipatam, Maisolus of the Greeks). In the middle ages Devagiri (Deogiri, Deogarh) was the leaping stone of the conquests of Alauddin Khilji and Malik Kafur. The defence of the Deccan against the Northern invaders by Gautamīputra, Pulakeśin II and the Yādavas was centred round this strategic site. Deogarh was renamed Kutbabad by Kutbuddin Mubarakh Shah and Daulatabad by Muhammad Tughlak. The latter's expedition against Rudradeva of Warangal in the South was based on his occupation of Deogarh which became the centre of his operations. Amir Khusrau the poet praises the city as the Garden of Eden with so many pearls and precious stones that the ocean and mines cannot produce any more. The Marathas could win the famous fortress of Daulatabad along with the whole of Aurangabad at the cost of the Moghul Empire only a year before the third battle of Pānipat. It is noteworthy that from Delhi, when he was threatened by Moghul invasion, Muhammad bin Tughlak removed his capital to Deogarh, occupying a central and strategic position in the sub-continent.

It is significant that through the centuries while Peninsular India succumbed to successive invasions from the North, and was finally incorporated in the conception of Hindu Imperialism under the Guptas, no power from the Deccan plateau could ever attempt to conquer or dominate Āryāvarta. The Narmadā valley opened out to the sea through such ancient ports as Bharukachcha, Sūrpāraka, Vaijayantī and Kalyāṇa. Due to the vast expanse of forests and steepness of the Western Ghats, the ancient city sites of the Deccan largely lay along the sea-coast. Intercourse with the outside world was accordingly easier for the Deccan than for the Ganges valley. Even in the millennia before Christ, South India had trade intercourse with the Indus valley civilization. There were also close commercial relations between the Deccan and the countries of the Middle East, as evidenced by the

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use of Dravidian words in ancient Hebrew texts from Judea. The legend of the saint and missionary Agastya, regarded as a patron saint of South India and Indonesia, and the story of the Rāmāyaṇa embodied the history of the Aryan colonisation of the South, which by the third century B.C. came definitely under the ambit of North Indian culture, as shown by the promulgation of two of Aśokan Rock edicts in Mysore, and the reference to the Deccan as a home of Sanskrit by Patañjali (about 150 B.C.).

The Sea, the Highway of the Spread of Indian Culture

In the Mahābhārata we find Agastya as having subdued and commanded the Vindhya mountains. Hence he is called the Vindhya-kūṭa. He has also another name Pitābdhi or Samudra-chuluka or sea-drinker for having punished and drunk up the ocean because it offended him and because he sought to help the gods in their wars with the Daityas. He is also the regent of the star Canopus that bears his name and that guides navigators across the Southern Sea. In the Rāmāyaṇa he is said to have lived on Mount Kuñjara, south of the Vindhyas, whence he kept under control the Rākshasas who infested the South so that they might only gaze upon, and not appropriate the territory. When Rāma visited the hermitage of Agastya during his exile, the saint offered protection, and gave him the celebrated Vishṇu's bow that stood him in good stead in his fight against Rāvaṇa. After Rāma's victory the sage went with him to Ayodhyā. The traditions and literature of the Tamil land attribute to Agastya the introduction of religion, culture and literature into the region; and the sage is still venerated in both South India and Indonesia. Appropriately does the Rāmāyaṇa, which is the saga of Aryan colonisation of the South, make Agastya a very prominent figure.

The legend of the saint and warrior Paraśurāma is also connected with the Southern colonisation. He chastises the ocean by shooting an arrow across it or by hurling his axe from Gokarṇa to Comorin. His traditional home is Mount Mahendra (the Eastern Ghats from Kalinga to Madura) or Mount Sahyādri (the Western Ghats north of the Kaveri) of the South, while Sūrpārakakshetra, identified with Sopara in Aparānta (Aparānta-mahītale), is also mentioned as his residence which the sea

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prepared for him at the end of his Aśvamedha sacrifice. All this might be reminiscent of reclamation of the land from the sea on the Arabian sea-coast. Tradition indeed describes the origin of the coast of Malabar to Paraśurāma who received it as a gift from the ocean-god Varuṇa, and according to another account drove back the ocean and cut fissures or passes (krauñcha) in the Western Ghats with the blows of his axe. Paraśurāma-kshetra comprises seven divisions: Kerala, Tulunga, Gaurāshṭra, Karahata, Barālāta, Barbara and Konkaṇa. The entire Arabian sea-coast thus appears to have been the result of Paraśurāma's adventures both against the sea and the Kshatriyas of foreign descent on the sea-coast. Paraśurāma's fight against Arjuna Kārttavīrya, the oppressor of the gods who had his capital at Māhiṣmatī on the Narmadā, and his annihilation of the Kshatriyas are reminders of the leadership of the Brahmans from the North in the colonisation enterprise in the Deccan that the Kshatriyas tried to checkmate. A whole host of traditions from the South makes Paraśurāma the progenitor of several castes, especially the low castes. It is noteworthy that his rise to avatarhood was much later than the Mahābhārata and even Kālidāsa's Raghuvaṁśam. Both Agastya and Paraśurāma—the pioneers of Aryan settlement of the South—are among India's immortals (chiranjīvin).

The Arabian sea-coast of India with such ancient ports as Bharukachcha (Broach), Sūrpāraka (Sopara), Roruka, Chekula (Caul) and Śrīputra had a more ancient history than the Tamil coast due to the much earlier contacts with the ancient civilization of the Middle East. Many products of the Deccan found in the tombs of the Pharaohs of Egypt and several Dravidian words preserved in ancient Hebrew literature testify to the early civilization and commerce of the Western sea-board. The coast of the Bay of Bengal also became the scene of Indian maritime adventure, commerce and colonisation in the Indian Archipelago. But since the countries of the Middle East were far more advanced in civilization in the millennia before Christ than the islands and countries of the Pacific, no noteworthy historical records of the Eastern commercial intercourse can be pointed out before the Sātavāhana period. Large-scale migrations from South India to Further India and Indonesia took place, however, in the pre-historic periods which profoundly influenced Melanesia and

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the whole of South-east Asia. It was only in the early centuries of the Christian era that the capital of the later Chola maritime kingdom, Kāverīpaddinam (Kamara of the Periplus, Khabari of Ptolemy) on the Kāverī (Cauvery) river became a centre of international trade, especially frequented by Egyptian-Greek and Chinese merchants. It is significant that the first impetus to colonisation in the Indian Archipelago or Dvīpāntara Bhārata came from the Sātavāhana Empire that was for about three centuries a dominant power in Middle India, extending from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal. For nearly two millennia Indian civilization had been spreading to Further India and the Eastern Islands, the Rāmāyaṇa mentioning Kishkindhā, Laṅkā, Java and Sumatra together. Thus in the Purāṇas we read not merely of the country lying north of the ocean and south of the snow ranges called Bhārata, but also of the nine islands or territories (Nava-bheda) of Bhārata-varsha, which are sanctified (kṛtapāvanāḥ) by the performance of sacrifice, warfare, trade and other diverse cultural activities. The religion, art, culture and social institutions of Further India and Indonesia bear the indelible impress of the maritime civilization of the South. It is noteworthy that the sea in the South and along the whole east coast of India has been receding, leading to the ruin of some most famous ancient ports. Fa-Hien in the 5th century, and Hiuen-Tsang and I-tsing, two centuries and a half later, found Tāmralipti a sea-port. Hiuen-Tsang actually describes the city as washed by the ocean. Now the sea is fully 60 miles distant. In the South, Ptolemy described Korkai as the centre of the pearl trade, but the sea is now 10 miles distant. Between Korkai and the sea stood also the famous sea-port of Kayal (literally lagoon), the mart of Western Asian horses, visited by Marco Polo (1271-1295). Like Tāmralipti in the North and Korkai in the extreme South many ancient ports of Kaliṅga and the Coromandel coast lie buried deep under the sand or river silt. Such famous harbours and ports as Saptagrāma, Kaliṅganagara, Paloura, Dhanakaṭaka, Kantakaṣola and Kāverīpaddinam have disappeared and cannot be even recognised.

If the sea was the highway for the spread of Indian culture throughout the Far East, it was also the sea that brought from Europe first the Portuguese and then the Dutch, English and French traders, adventurers and conquerors to the port towns in

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Western India, the Coromandel Coast, Bengal and the Indian Archipelago. The simultaneous occupation of the three strategically important coast regions of the Carnatic, Gujarat and Bengal, the supremacy of the sea and the control of the Indian Ocean routes and of the resources of the Ganges plain enabled the British to win the Empire of India in the final struggle with the French, who could never win by starting from Pondicherry as a base and fighting a power which won ascendency in Bengal and commanded the Western sea-routes.

The Scientific Frontiers on the North-West

So long as the north-western borderlands belonged to foreign or weak Indian rulers and the mountain doors of India remained ajar, inviting the hordes from Central and Western Asia ever eager to conquer the fertile plains of inner India, no enduring peace and stability of the country was possible. It was only the Maurya Emperor, Chandragupta, who could push the Indian frontier to the natural barrier of the Hindukush, up to far-off Kāpiśa (once the capital of Gāndhāra) with the famous frontier fortresses of Maśakāvatī, Varana and Pushkalāvatī, north of the Khyber high road. These frontier towns were in the Maurya Empire linked up with the imperial capital of Pāṭalīputra in the east by the Royal road described by Megasthenes. The Hindukush separated the Maurya Empire from that of Seleucus Nicator. Thus could Chandragupta give India the only lasting peace she knew in history. Greek invasions of India in the third and second centuries B.C., following the decline of the Maurya Empire, were facilitated by the conquest of the Kabul and lower Indus valleys by Antiochus and Demetrius and King Menander's establishment of his kingdom in the Punjab, with Śākala as his capital whence he penetrated into the Gangetic basin as far east as Sāketa and perhaps Pāṭalīputra. The Greek penetration was succeeded by successive drifts of the Śakas, Pahlavas and Kushans, who retained mastery of Western India and Malwa until the end of the fourth century. The Kushan Empire extended from Sogdiana, Bactria, Gāndhāra and Kashmir in the north-west to Banaras and beyond in the east. The decline of the Kushan power in the north-west was accelerated by the rise of the Persian Sassanians, who conquered Śakasthāna and parts of North-west India and probably replaced the Kushans in the Punjab in

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the third and fourth centuries A.D. At the end of the fifth century, the Gupta Empire lost Kashmir and some of its westernmost provinces to the Huns under Toramāṇa and Mihiragula, who penetrated into the Indian interior as far as eastern Malwa. Such was the danger of the empire from Saurāshṭra, the old stronghold of the Śakas recently conquered by Skandagupta, that he appointed the ablest of his Provincial Governors (Goptā), Parṇadatta, in charge of this vulnerable, disturbed region, and also special Wardens of the Marches. In the Vishṇu Purāṇa we read that not only in Saurāshṭra, Avantī and the desert up to Arbuda (Mount Abu) but also on the banks of the Indus (Sindhu), the Darvikorvi (i.e. the land of the Darvas), Chandrabhāgā (Chenab) and Kashmir tracts the Mlechchhas, Vrātyas and other Śūdras will rule. Like the Indus valley, Kashmir belongs to India, reached from the western route across the gorge of Varāhamūla (Baramulla) with its old frontier gate (dvāra). The Darvābhisāra country lies south-west between the Vitastā (Jhelum) and the Chandrabhāgā (Chenab)—the country of the ancient Darvas and the Abhisāras mentioned by Varāhamihira. The Mahābhārata indeed includes Uttarāpatha or Udīchya as the north-western (paschimottara) division of India, including the entire Oxus and Kabul valleys and Kashmir inhabited by the Yonas, Kāmbojas, Gandharvas, Kirātas, and Vālhīkas. Vātsyāyana in his Kāmasūtra definitely mentions that Vālhīka is in Uttarāpatha. Most of the Purāṇas include the tribes of the Oxus and Kabul valleys under the Udīchya division or deśa of India. All this is significant as appreciative of the full significance of the "scientific frontiers" along the Oxus, Kabul, Indus, Jhelum and Chenab rivers in the epoch of the Imperial Guptas.

The same vivid and sagacious understanding of the natural frontiers of India is discernible in Kālidāsa, the national poet of the Gupta age (about 400 A.D.), while describing Raghu's digvijaya (Raghuvaṁśam, IV, 60-75). After the conquest of Aparānta or the Arabian sea-board, with its flourishing ports of Sūrpāraka and Kalyāṇa, Raghu prefers the land-route (pratasthe sthalavartmanā) to the sea-route in his expedition to Iran. He seems to have crossed the Bolan Pass in order to reach Iran, where he defeats the bearded Pāraśika horsemen, who supplicate for refuge by removing their turbans. (Or did Raghu meet the Pāraśikas in the lower Indus basin, which according to Jarl

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Carpentier and Herzfeld, was occupied along with Cutch, Baluchistan and the Punjab in this period by the Sassanian kings?) His journey from Aparānta or Northern Konkan to Iran is through the country of the Yavanas (i.e. Pārasikas) with whom he did not fight; but his passage leads to the suspension of merry-making of the Yavana girls, even as an untimely advent of clouds prevents lotuses from enjoying the sunshine. From Iran Raghu proceeds northward to Bāhlīkadeśa or Bactria, the valley of the Oxus (Bankshu), the main channel of communication between Gāndhāra, Kāmboja, Tibet and Turkestan. Here by the middle of the fifth century (407-553 A.D.) the White Huns or Hepthalites established a powerful empire that dominated Central Asia, extending from Gāndhāra and the Indus region to Khotan and Karashahr, and that was in bitter conflict with the Persian Empire, the Oxus constituting for a period the boundary between the two empires. The dim rumblings of the see-saw struggle between the two mighty empires on the Indian borderland were audible in this country. In 484 the Huns' signal victory over Sassanid Peroz freed them for raids from the Punjab into Hindustan. To avenge these expeditions Kālidāsa makes his hero carry his victorious arms beyond the Hindukush to Bāhlīka where he is said to have an encounter with the Huns; for Gāndhāra, Kāmboja and Bāhlīka really belonged to India. Does not the iron pillar at Delhi refer to Emperor Chandra's (probably Chandragupta II's) "conquest of the Vahlikas in a running fight across the seven mouths of the river Sindhu"? The Imperial Guptas subjugated the territories of the Devaputras, Śhāhis and Śhāhānuśhāhis, who represented the vestigial remains of the retreating Kushan power in the Punjab and North-west, and also the territory across the Hindukush mountains. "Raghu's horses, relieved of the fatigue of the journey by rolling on the banks of the Bankshu (Oxus), shook their bodies which had saffron flowers clinging to their manes". Saffron was a product of the Oxus valley and a word for saffron is balhikam. Thus did Kālidāsa extend the geographical horizon of Bhārata-varsha in the north and north-west to the Hindukush and the Oxus basin, including regions which even up to the time of the Muslim conquest were ruled by kings of Indian derivation and bore Sanskritic names and the impress of Indian culture. On his return journey Raghu quells the Kāmbojas of Badakshan and North

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Afghanistan. The Kāmbojas are often mentioned in association with the Gāndhāras and Yavanas, the territory of the latter being identified with Alasanda beyond the Hindukush. Then he crosses the Himalayas and defeats the mountain peoples, the Kirātas, the Utsavasaṅketas (literally people of loose affections) and the Kinnaras—the polyandrous tribes of the Tibeto-Himalayan region and Nepal. Traversing eastward the whole length of the Himalayas along the Lauhitya or Brahmaputra he crosses the river and enters Prāgjyotiṣa, the land of the Kāmarūpas, Bhutan and Assam. There is no doubt that the conquests of Samudragupta Parākramāṅka and Chandragupta II Vikramāditya fed the imagination of the national poet of India and enabled him to reconstruct ideally the natural frontiers of India from the river Oxus in the north-west and the gateway of Lauhitya in the north-east to the Pūrvasāgara or the Bay of Bengal and the Mahodadhi or the great Indian Ocean on the south. Thus the ideal empire of India is bounded only by the seas (velā pravalāyām parikhīkritasāgarām), comprising the whole of Jambu-dvīpa.

Like the narrow strip between the desert and the mountains, which forms the gateway to Delhi and the plains of Hindustan, the plateau of Malwa (ancient Avantī), south of the Indian desert, is another cockpit of India, facilitating, as it does, the movement between the Indus plains and the east, across the corridors of the Sindh (Sindhu) and the Betva rivers, and the south to the Deccan. The Malwa plateau connected historically Gujarat, Rajputana and the Deccan, with Ujjayinī, the meeting point of the mid-Indian routes, as the scene of many migrations, invasions and critical battles in Indian history. Aśoka's occupation of the viceregal seat at Ujjayinī and Agnimitra's at Vidiśā, the siege of Mādhyamika near Chitore in Rajputana by the Yavanas, mentioned by Patañjali, the removal of the Imperial Gupta capital to Ujjayinī by Chandragupta (Vikramāditya) after his conquest of the Śakas, and the final routing of the Huns by Yaśodharman, King of Daśapura in Western Malwa (called Dakshiṇa-Sindhu in the Mahābhārata and Sindhu in the Meghadūta and the Mālati-Mādhava), testify to the ancient strategic importance of Malwa as a bastion of resistance against occupation of the Midland country by foreigners.

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It was on the banks of the river Sindhu, the tributary of the Chambal, in eastern Malwa that the tide of the Yavanas, who had even penetrated into Mewar, was successfully arrested by Agnimitra's son in the 2nd century B.C. after the fall of the Mauryas. The Purāṇic and other Indian evidences indicate that the Śaka conquest preceded that of the Yavanas or Greeks in India. The latter were established in the Punjab and the Kabul valley about the beginning of the 2nd century B.C. The Śakas came to India not directly by the Khyber route but from the other side of the Indus over the Bolan pass from Seistan through Drangiana, which they conquered in the middle of the 2nd century B.C. The Jaina text, Kalakāchārya-kathānaka, mentions that the Sagakula, i.e. the Śaka race, came to India by first crossing the Indus in ships and went to Kathiawar. They occupied the kingdom of Surāshṭra (Kathiawar and Gujarat) and divided the country among themselves. Next they won a naval victory on the Indus over the Seleucid Greeks in India and gradually conquered Taxila, Gāndhāra and Kāpiśa (77 B.C. to 60 B.C.). They then proceeded to Ujjayinī, where they imprisoned the Gardabhilla king and established one of their chiefs as ruler, and to Mathurā. Thus one of the oldest Śaka rulers of India, Maues, extended his rule from Mathurā to Kāpiśa, reaching out from the Śaka settlements in Kathiawar and the Indus delta. In 58 B.C. Maues was defeated by the Mālavas, who regained Ujjayinī, and met his death. Other Śaka incursions took place much later in the wake of the Parthian and the Yueh-chi invasions of the Punjab, the Śakas this time coming to the Punjab along the Kabul valley and also along the Yasin valley, Kashmir and Udyāna via the Bolan route. The Śaka Empire of Maues in Kathiawar and the Indus valley could not be revived, but from about 150 A.D. to 390 A.D. the Śaka power held Malwa, Cutch, Sind, Surāshṭra and Mahārāshṭra (including Konkan and other districts). Towards the end of the 3rd century A.D. Śakasthāna meant not only Seistan but also the lower Indus valley, Kathiawar, Gujarat and even Malwa. The Śaka Kshatrapas captured the strategic Sātavāhana port of Kaḷyāṇa (on the eastern shore of Bombay harbour) and subjugated the Konkan coast, diverting the lucrative Roman trade to Barygaza "under guard". This is referred to in the Periplus of the Erythræan Sea. The Arabian sea coast below the Vindhyas with its important ports was a

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prized possession that ultimately was seized by the Śakas after about a century's warfare with the Sātavāhana emperors who had to satisfy themselves with their Western commerce through the port of Vaijayantī and their eastern commerce through the capital city of Dharaṇīkoṭa. The Śaka satraps through their conquest of Malwa not only commanded the mid-Indian route of communication but their powerful navy enabled them to reap the benefit of the Western commerce concentrated, before the use of monsoon for navigation, in the ports of Barbara (Barbaricum at the mouth of the Indus), Sūrpāraka, Bharukachcha and Kalyāṇa. The conquest of the entire Indus valley from Taxila to Barbara, Malwa, Gujarat, Surāshṭra and Konkan and the deployment of both naval and land forces enabled the Northern and Western Śakas to easily establish and entrench themselves in North-western, Western and Central India for well-nigh four to five centuries. They were ultimately overthrown by the Gupta Emperor Chandragupta II (Vikramāditya).

It was a signal heroic achievement of the Hindu Rājachakravarti from the Ganges valley of completely stemming the tide of "barbarian" Śaka invaders who steadily swarmed into the Indus basin and Malwa for four centuries (during the last two centuries B.C. and the first two centuries A.D.) and gradually annexed not only North-western India but also Western, Central and a considerable portion of Northern India including the holy land of Bhāgavatism. No wonder this decisive victory revived heroic traditions in Indian legends and tales as well as in sculptures. The restoration of Vidiśā and Ujjayinī as sub-capitals under Chandragupta from the beginning of the 5th century also indicates a correct appreciation of the danger of the Śaka menace to the Ganges basin from this region in the flank. Western and Central India was, to be sure, the scene of continuous Śaka and Pahlava drifts from Seistan and Arachosia (Kandahar) through Baluchistan and the lower Indus valley from the first to the fourth century A.D. Śaka families settled in Kāpiśa, Gāndhāra, Eastern Punjab, Ujjain and Mathurā and were gradually assimilated into Hindu society. One of the greatest of the Śaka overlords, Rudradāman, established his empire in India, including Aparānta (Konkan) in the South, Ākara (capital Vidiśā), Avantī (capital Ujjain), Maru (Marwar), Surāshṭra (capital Girinagara)

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and Sindhu-Sauvīra (the lower Indus), between 130 A.D. and 150 A.D., and entered into a matrimonial alliance with the Sātavāhana house. But his successors were feeble. The Śaka-Pahlava kings and the Ābhīras who wrested power from the latter continued to rule in Surāshṭra, Malwa and Mathurā up to the rise of the Guptas in the fourth century A.D. Skandagupta (455-467 A.D.) had to deal with a new formidable enemy—the Huns who made their first incursion into India from the basin of the Oxus towards the middle of the fifth century A.D. He won his memorable victory over the Huns and the Mlechchhas, who "shook the empire" in the reign of his father, presumably, somewhere in Malwa as recorded in his Bhitari inscription. The White Huns defeated the King of Persia in 484 A.D. and their principal centres in Iran were Badakshan and Bamiyan whence they penetrated into India. The Hun Empire at the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century A.D. included Iran, Khotan, Gāndhāra, the Punjab, Kashmir and parts of Rajputana, Gujarat and Malwa. The metropolis of Abiria, the land of the Ābhīras, became Minnagara, the city of Min, in the Indus delta with the port of Barbaricum nearby (but sometimes identified with Mandasor, or Madhyamika or Nagara). The Eran inscriptions refer to the struggle between Bhānugupta (510 A.D.) and the Huns in Central India and to the subjugation of Sagar and other parts of the Central Provinces by Toramāṇa (510-515 A.D.). His son Mihiragula (515-535 A.D.) ruled from Sialkot in the Punjab over even a larger empire extending from the Himalayas to Rajputana and Malwa. Both Toramāṇa and Mihiragula enormously increased the power and prestige of the Hun Empire in India. It was in Malwa that a confederacy of Hindu kings, headed by Samrāt Yaśodharman of Daśapura or Mandasor, finally destroyed the Hun military power in 528 A.D. by defeating Mihiragula who wanted to advance further eastwards. Yaśodharman (Vishṇuvardhana) extended his sovereignty over Eastern India (Prāchī), Western India, Malwa and the north (Kashmir), "from the Brahmaputra to the Western Ocean and from the Himalayas to Mahendragiri"; he conquered countries "which not even the Guptas nor the Huns could ever conquer, and to whose feet homage was paid even by Mihiragula," runs the inscription. We know little of this Indian Napoleon who suddenly appears like a dazzling solitary star on the Indian

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political firmament, shakes the Hun Imperial power, founds a vast empire and then within only a decade or so suddenly fades away. Emperor Harshavardhana (606-648 A.D.) restored the unity and peace of India, which she had lost since the downfall of the Imperial Guptas, by annexing Malwa, obtaining in fief the rich kingdom of Valabhī (comprising Gujarat and Kathiawar) and pursuing the Hun hordes "as far as the inaccessible country and the snowy mountains of Tokharistan". The vulnerable frontier regions of Kashmir, Sind and Valabhī came under his influence, and Malwa was his bastion of resistance against the Huns. In the eighth and ninth centuries A.D. the invasions of tribes from the Indus countries, of the Gurjaras from Northern Rajputana and of other foreigners again endangered the Brahmanical culture of Madhyadeśa by pressing forward to Malwa, and this bastion of Madhyadeśa defence was lost for a few centuries to the Gurjaras, Tomaras, Gaharwars and Chandelas, who became ruling powers in Northern India. A century later Mahmud of Ghazni after the sack of Somnath suffered serious reverses at the hands of Bhoja of Western Malwa who barred his way of retreat and compelled his army to flee to safety through the desert to Multan. Full five centuries elapsed after the Arab conquest of Sind and the persistent but futile efforts of the Arab chieftains of Brahmanabad to conquer Malwa and enter the Deccan, before the Turko-Afghan invasion of India from the north-west could force the Delhi gateway and penetrate into the heart of Hindustan. At the beginning of this millennium the rise into power of the House of Ghazni, which occupied parts of Central Asia and the entire trans-Indus region, including Khorasan and Afghanistan, and subsequently conquered the Punjab, initiated the first stage of the Moslem conquest of Hindustan. The first base of the Moghul expedition to India was the valley of the Kabul whence Lahore was easily subjugated, serving as a most important forward base for movements in three directions: to Delhi, to Multan and Sind and also to Kashmir. The occupation of Delhi served as usual as the strategic and decisive factor in the conquest of Hindustan.

The Maintenance of Scientific Frontiers

When the "scientific" frontiers could not be maintained and powerful Iranian, Greek, Parthian, Kuchan, Śakâ, Hun, Arab and

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Timurid kingdoms arose in Afghanistan, Kashmir and the Punjab or in Sind and Kathiawar, India became the victim of a series of invasions. The British placed strong frontier garrisons at Peshawar, ancient Purushapura, at Rawalpindi, near ancient Taxila, at Quetta, Lahore, Ferozepur, Karachi, Multan, Ambala, —all on the highways of invasion from the north-western passes, while they also pursued a steadfast policy of excluding from Afghanistan and Seistan all foreign powers and retained full control in the Persian gulf. On the other hand, the north-western gateways could also be used for the diffusion of Buddhism and Indian culture in the Asiatic continent under the Mauryan, Kushan and Gupta empires when the whole of Gāndhāra and Kashmir were under their possession. Samudragupta Parākramāṅka conquered the Punjab, Afghanistan and Gāndhāra and used the Chinese and Iranian titles, Daivaputra-Shāhi-Shāhānushāhi, formerly used by the great Kushan emperors. With the Hun conquest of Gāndhāra towards the close of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th centuries A.D. hosts of outlandish barbarians poured into the Indian plains. Yet in the seventh century A.D. the valley of Kabul was a part of India. Here the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang met at Kāpiśā, the junction of the Asian trade routes and a Buddhist city, the first Hindu and Jain ascetics of his journey.

Not the Punjab, Sind, Gujarat or Malwa but the plains of the Ganges are more suitable for empire building. The magnitude of population, wealth and resources as well as the opportunity of admixture of race and culture elements made the Ganges valley the focus of successive historical attempts at the political unification of India as well as of recurrent reform movements dissolving pure Brahmanism into Hinduism. Thus, after the Gupta era, the emperors of Āryāvarta—Yaśodharman, the Maukharis, the house of Puṣyabhūti and Harsha of Thaneswar and Kanauj, the Gurjara-Pratihāras of Kanauj, and finally the Pālas of Bengal with their "Trailokyavijaya" campaigns—successively had their major task of defending the country against new foreign invaders. The Moghul conquest of Hindustan united Fergana, Kabul and Delhi under one empire and gave peace; but the conquest of the important frontier province, Kandahar, by the Shah of Persia in 1622 was the first serious disaster for the Moghul Empire. Neither Jahangir nor Shahjehan nor Aurangzeb

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could recapture Kandahar that has been since lost to India for good. Aurangzeb followed a vigorous north-west frontier policy, and, though he could not recapture Kandahar, he defeated the Afridis and the Afghans and strengthened the Indian garrison at Peshawar. Afghanistan continued under the Moghul sway until 1739. The great Maratha-Afghan battle of Panipat in 1761 crippled the Marathas and paved the way for the English supremacy of India. It was particularly fortunate for the latter that the Afghans who aimed at the conquest of Hindustan on the downfall of the Moghul Empire were prevented from doing so due to internal troubles at Kabul and the impotence of the successors of Ahmad Shah Abdali. The loss of the north-west frontier from Kandahar to Kashmir and from Peshawar to Samarkand has always threatened the peace and unity of India through the ages.

On the other hand, Indian culture, religion and trade influenced Central Asia and China, especially in those periods when she controlled the Central Asian land-routes. Britain after the conquest of India sealed the north-western routes for stability and security, and thus isolated India from the rest of Asia. The Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, often stresses that this sudden isolation had been one of the most remarkable and unfortunate consequences of British rule in India. Rapson observes in this connection: "The power which has succeeded in welding the subordinate ruling powers into one great system of government is essentially naval, and since it controls the seaways, it has been forced in the interests of security to close the land-ways. This has been the object of British policy in regard to the countries which lie on the frontiers of the Indian Empire, Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Burma. Political isolation has thus followed as a necessary consequence of political unity. But it must be remembered that this political isolation is a recent and an entirely novel feature in the history of India. It is the great landmark which separates the present from the past."

The Ancient Land-routes

Many famous ancient routes, that were virtually closed as the result of British occupation, had for centuries connected India with the outside world. These were highways of traffic and pilgrim travel as well as of migration and invasion:

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(1) The north-western land-route through Afghanistan, joining up with the pan-Asian trade route at Balkh and crossing the Oxus to the Caspian Sea and the Middle East. This was the great historic route of migration, conquest, trade and cultural intercourse which connected India with Central Asia, China and the Middle East. There were two parallel routes: the earlier one started from ancient Pushkalāvatī (modern Charsada, 20 miles north-east of Peshawar), while the later route, used since the beginning of the millennium after the establishment of Purushapura (modern Peshawar) as the capital of the Imperial Kushans, started from Purushapura and followed a more south-westerly line along the Kabul river towards the west. The great Mauryan Imperial road that ran from Pāṭalīputra to Bālhīka was probably constructed on the pattern of the imperial roads of the Achæmenids in Western and Central Asia. Gāndhāra, Kāmboja and Sind that were included within the Persian Empire must have been connected with the great Achæmenid roads to Persepolis. From the time of the foundation of the Seleucid Empire at the beginning of the 4th century B.C. in the north-western borderlands of India commerce became brisk between the valleys of the Oxus, the Indus and the Ganges, promoted by the great arterial route from Magadha to Bactriana, which also radiated from Kauśāmbī in the upper Ganges valley to the ancient sea-ports of Bharukachcha and Sūrpāraka.

(2) The Western Indo-Levantine route which started from the Indus delta through the Bolan and Mula passes to Kandahar and crossing the Helmand ran to Persia and the Mediterranean. This was also much used in ancient times for the transport of Indian merchandise through Persia to the Levant. The rise of the Kushan Empire with its control over the Indus valley, Gāndhāra and Turkestan safeguarded the major routes of communication—the north-western route from Gāndhāra to the Middle East through Bactria and to China through Turkestan and also the western route from Kandahar through Persia to the Mediterranean sea-ports. Thus a regular trade was established between the Ganges, the Indus, the Euphrates, the Oxus, and the Mediterranean, Caspian and Black seas. It was by the Western Indo-Levantine route that the Roman Empire used to trade with China through the Indian intermediaries in the early centuries of this millennium. Political conditions determined

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which route between India, Persia and Central Asia was used for Asian trade. Thus, for instance, in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., when the trade route east of the Oxus became insecure with the decay of the Roman, Kushan and Hun empires, the caravan route from Merv through Kandahar and the Bolan pass to India became important, and Indo-Sassanian commerce and cultural intercourse established themselves along this channel. The western route was also a highway of invasion and conquest first by the Achæmenid emperors, who after their conquest of the Indus valley gave the name to India, and then by the Sassanians, Śakas, Pahlavas and Ābhīras.

(3) The coastal Indo-Egyptian route through inhospitable Makran and the Mula pass or along the coastal strip in Baluchistan which crossing the valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris proceeded to Arabia and Egypt. This was much used by the Arab merchants during the middle ages. Las Bela in Southern Baluchistan is, like Peshawar and Quetta, a true gateway to India which was crossed by successive waves of human migration for centuries in search of the fertile Indus low-lands.

(4) Two important roads across the Pamirs and the Karakoram mountains linked Kashmir with the Chinese route meeting it at Kashgar and Khotan respectively. Fa-Hien travelled from Khotan to a town in Ladakh not clearly identified. He must have travelled along the Indo-Tibetan caravan route through the Karakoram pass and gone through Kashmir and Darada territory to Udyāna crossing the Indus. For centuries India's contact with Tibet and China was through the Zogi-la pass in Ladakh and the Karakoram pass immediately leading towards Khotan on the southern Chinese caravan route or towards the Tibetan plateau. This was one of the highways by which the Buddhist monks and pilgrims of Kashmir, which was one of the principal seats of Buddhist learning and culture, reached the Tarim basin for the spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and established Indian colonies and settlements on the oases along both the northern and southern caravan routes to China. There was also the more important western route through the Baramulla gateway and Gilgit, ascending the Pamir mountain-knot for reaching the great pan-Asian highway at Kashgar (Kasha). The army of Kaniṣka I under the command of Si also crossed the Taghdumbash Pamir through the Tashkurghan

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pass and emerged into the plain below either near Yarkand or near Kashgar. It was when the nomad Western Turks appeared on the scene and the Tibetan bandits grew too turbulent that both the caravan routes were interrupted, and the Chinese pilgrims to India preferred the overseas route. Kashmir had been successfully invaded by foreigners, via the Karakoram, Sassar and Zogi-la passes. In the 14th century the Turk Dulca and the Bhautt Rincuna entered Kashmir and subjugated the Hindu kingdom of the valley. In the 16th century Mirza Muhammad Haider with a small Moghul force penetrated into Kashmir through the Zogi-la pass. Again, Sultan Said Khan of Kashgar invaded Srinagar through the Zogi-la pass in 1531 and defeated the Muhammadan king, Muhammad Shah. It was from the 7th century onwards, if not earlier, that the intercourse of the Ladakh region of Kashmir with Tibet became regular and significant on the wake of the political unification of the Tibetan plateau and Nepal consummated by the Tibetan conqueror Srong-tsan Gampo. This emperor and his successors were by no means averse to cultural movements, and indeed we can easily discern some of the vital elements of Gupta art following the track from Leh to Tibet and Nepal. It is noteworthy that the Chinese made an attack on Baltistan in Kashmir in 736-747 A.D. Lalitāditya-Muktāpīḍa, King of Kashmir, then negotiated with the Chinese Emperor for an alliance against the Tibetans mentioning that he had made a common cause with the King of Central India, probably Yaśovarman of Kanauj, and had blocked the five routes of Tibet.

(5) The land-route from Northern Bengal, Assam and Manipur across Upper Burma along the valleys of the Chindween, Irawady, Salween and Mekong to Tonkin and thence by sea to Southern China. This was a celebrated route connecting India, Burma, Thailand and Indo-China and was used from the first centuries of the millennium till at least the 9th century A.D. It was connected by another route from Dvārāvatī and Kambuja. It is remarkable that there were ancient and now forgotten settlements along the entire stretch of the mountainous terrain from Assam and Manipur to the upper reaches of the Mekong and the Red River. Gerini observes in this connection: "From the Brahmaputra and Manipur to the Tonkin gulf we can trace a continuous string of petty states ruled by those scions of the

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Kshatriya race using the Sanskrit or the Pāli languages, in official documents, after the Indu style and employing Brahman priests for the propitiatory ceremonies connected with the Court and the State. Among such Indu monarchies we may mention those of Tagong, Upper Pugan, and Sen-wi in Burma; of Muang Hang, Chieng Rung, Muang Khwan, and Daśārṇa (Luang Phrah Bang) in the Lau country and of Agranagara (Hanoi) and Champā in Tonkin and Annam."

(6) The land-route through the passes of the Himalayas across Sikkim and the Chumbi valley to Tibet and China. One invasion of the Ganges valley took place from the north-east across the Tibetan mountain passes—the invasion of Wang-hiuen-tse, envoy of the Chinese Emperor Tai Toung, who was aided by Srong-tsan Gampo, king of Tibet, and Kumāra king of Kāmarūpa. The Tibetan invader laid waste a considerable area of Northern India, imprisoned the Minister of Emperor Harsha and went back to China. He is said to have conquered half of India. After his death in the middle of the 7th century A.D. his grandson continued to rule over the Tibetan dominion in India. Tibet, the land of the hermits, had an extensive empire including Nepal and Eastern India for about two centuries after the death of Harsha. At the beginning of the 13th century Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji after his conquest of Varendra and capture of the city of Gaur went out on an expedition to Tibet (1206 A.D.) from Devkot in Dinajpur. After crossing the Bagmati or Tiesta he marched through Kāmarūpa and came down to Tibet after a fifteen days' march through a most difficult mountainous terrain. He was victorious in a hard-fought battle, but had to retreat, meeting disasters all the way back to Devkot. The Tibet road was the great highway of Buddhist and Tāntrika pilgrim travel between Magadha or Vaṅga and Tibet. In the Tabaqat-i-Nasiri (middle of 13th century) we read: "Between Kamarupa and Tibet there are thirty-five mountain passes through which horses are brought to Lakhnauti (Gaur)". The Burmans and the Shans invaded Kāmarūpa in the past across the mountainous eastern frontier, Assam deriving its name from the Burmese Ahom race; while the Maghs of Arakan, along with the Portuguese, devastated the eastern and lower deltas of Bengal. But, on the whole, the movement of culture was eastward. Indian culture met Chinese culture in the Mekong valley

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in the Far East as it did in the north in the Tarim basin. British India was, on the whole, a sealed country, isolated from the rest of the Asian continent and incapacitated from wielding that cultural influence by which she had left an indelible impress on one-half of humanity through the past centuries.

Within the Moghul and British empires in India, Rajputana, especially Mewar, with its many hills and forts, through which ran the highway from the Ganges valley to Malwa, Gujarat and the Western Coast, had been the bastion of Rajput resistance and could be won only through the combination of force and diplomacy. The consolidation of Moghul power in India rested on alliances with the Rajputs. The Peshwas could not win over the latter under their banner of Hindu-Pad-Pādshāhi. The British, after defeating the principal powers of India, could easily succeed in obtaining their friendship through treaties of protection and subordinate co-operation.

The Classic Ideal of Universal Sovereignty

The well-marked geographical divisions of the Indian subcontinent into homogeneous natural and cultural regions led to the formation of various independent kingdoms and principalities, as in Europe, that had a separate and chequered history of their own. Such political entities in the north include the Pañchanada or the Punjab, Kashmir, the Gangetic doab, Avantī, Sūrasena, Kośala, Magadha, Aṅga, Vaṅga and Kaḷiṅga. The political boundaries, of course, differed from epoch to epoch depending upon the relative strength of the kings and dynasties of the various kingdoms. In the south the natural divisions led to the system of the Trairājya, i.e. the triple Pāṇḍya, Chola and Kerala kingdoms, each of which had a distinct history of its own. It was regional peculiarities more than dynastic ambitions, as in the Ganges valley, that maintained the political entity of the Pāṇḍyamaṇḍalaṁ, Toṇḍamaṇḍalaṁ and Kerala through the epochs. Corresponding to such well-marked political entities are Magadha, Sind, Gujarat and Bengal in Northern India. It was from the northern Indo-Gangetic plains that the Maurya, Kushan and Gupta empires took their birth and welded the various kingdoms and principalities of a considerable portion of India into a unity. The Rājasūya and Aindramahābhisheka sacrifices of the Vedic Sārvabhauma kings, mentioned

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in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa; the epic ideal of political integration of India, symbolised by the Aśvamedha and the Rājasūya sacrifices, sanctified by the presence of Krishna-Vāsudeva after the battle of Kurukshetra; Kauṭilya's conception of universal sovereignty extending to the four quarters (chaturānta) and the Maurya and Gupta conception of the Ekarāṭ Chakravartin, the supreme monarch of Jambu-dvīpa—all these in the successive epochs have embodied the objective of the political unification of Āryāvarta (Dharaṇībandha) that has dominated her kings and peoples. This ideal of Samrāṭ, Chakravartin or Mahārājādhirāja has been stressed throughout the entire course of Indian civilization in many kāvyas and inscriptions of big and small aspirants to Imperial power. Gautama the Buddha borrowed his idea of the Empire of Dharma from the ancient Vedic political ideal of Chakravartin. "A king, I am," he says, "the king of supreme righteousness. The royal chariot wheel in righteousness do I set rolling on the wheel that no one can turn back again." Sometimes, as in the case of the Mauryan Empire, it was "world conquest" (digvijaya) by means of dharma (dharmavijaya). Sometimes it was both digvijaya and dharmavijaya, as in the case of the Gupta, Vākāṭaka and Sātavāhana empires, a unification through the might of arms (parākrama) and re-establishment of Hindu society and Sanskrit culture as well as defence of the holy land against the foreign invaders. The Sātavāhanas like their predecessors, the Vākāṭakas, embodied the Vindhya-Śakti, born of the geography of Middle India, separated from the northern empires by the Vindhyas. The basic political traditions flowing from the Sātavāhana Empire had an unbroken continuity and provided the historic mission of the Vijayanagara Empire, that for three centuries comprised an impregnable bulwark against Moslem invasions and of the Maratha Empire aiming at Sārvabhaumarājya in the middle of the seventeenth century.

Bharata, Country and Culture

If the political unification of all India and achievement of sole supreme sovereignty (Aikādhirājyam) has remained far from being achieved due to the vicissitudes of political history in the different epochs, Indian religion, art and ritual have produced a cultural unity. Ancient Purāṇas, poems, temples, gods and

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pilgrimages all instil into the Indian mind the most essentially fundamental unity of India. With her varied climate, soil and topography and intersected by lofty mountains and mighty rivers, India is sub-divided into many regions and inhabited by congeries of races and peoples. Yet in their vision there is one mother-land from the snow-clad mountain in the north to the bridge of Rāmachandra in the southern ocean (Himavat setu paryantam), with the Ganges as the pearl garland (Gaṅgā-mauktika-hāriṇī), the Himalayas and the Vindhyas as ear-pendants (Himavat-Vindhya-kuṇḍalā) and the people all common children of Bharata who first established sovereignty over the land (Bhāratī yatra Santatiḥ). The traditional cultural divisions of Bhārata-varsha are six: (1) Middle Country (Madhyadeśa), (2) Himalayan Region (Himavanta), (3) North-Western Region (Uttarāpatha), (4) Deccan (Dakshiṇāpatha), (5) Eastern India (Pūrvānta), and (6) Western India (Aparānta). But these divisions are welded together into one holy land "lying north of the Samudra and south of the Himādri", whose boundaries are sometimes extended to the north and north-west, including Uttara Kuru, Uttara Madra, Bālhīka (Balkh) and even Pārasika or Persia.

The Institutions of Pilgrimage and Pageant

But Bhārata-varsha is not a mere geographical integration. The Vishṇu Purāṇa includes among the principal nations of Bhārata the foreign Huns, the Mādras and the Pārasikas, but points out that Bhārata is the land of works, or virtuous acts and pious ceremonies (Karma-bhūmi) and not of enjoyment alone (Bhoga-bhūmi). Manu also stresses that the land is made by the gods (deva-nirmitaṁ deśaṁ). The sacred cities, lakes, rivers and mountains of Bhārata-varsha are distributed throughout the length and breadth of the continent, including sites in the Himalayas as well as in the far south up to the Setuvandha. The seven holy cities of Bhārata-varsha (sapta-mokshadā-puri) are Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Māyā (Hardwar), Kāśī (Banaras), Kānchī (Conjeevaram), Avantikā (Ujjain) and Dvārāvatī (Dwarka) representing all the cultural regions of India. The seven sacred rivers are the Gaṅgā, Jamuna, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu and Kāverī. The seven holy mountains (sapta-kulāchala) are Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Śuktimāna, Gandhamādana, Vindhya and Pāripātra. Thus is Himavat-setu-paryantaṁ comprehended into a spiritual unity.

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The sacred temples of Vishṇu, Śiva and Devī are placed on the principal mountains and lakes or sea-shores and on the banks of the mighty rivers scattered throughout the vast country. In the farthest north in the Himalayas near to where India meets Tibet and China, we have the temples of Amaranātha, Kedāranātha and Badrī Nārāyaṇa in the silence and majesty of the glacier-clad heights. Farthest in the east we have the temples of the Mother Goddess at Kāmākhyā where the river Brahmaputra makes a vast swing around and Hindu observance mingles with Chinese ritual infiltrating from across the north-eastern mountain passes. There is also the temple of Śiva at Chandranātha on the inaccessible mountain fastness of Chittagong overlooking the boundary of another territory. In the farthest south on the sea-shore of the tempest-tossed Cape, we have the temple of the love-lorn maiden goddess, Kanyā Kumārikā. In the farthest west we have the temples of Śiva at Somnath and of Vishṇu at Dwarka. In Ajmere surrounded by the great desert we have the temple of Sāvitrī, where the morning sun reflects the purity of the goddess on the calm water of the sacred Pushkara lake. Many are the sacred temples of gods and goddesses on the meandering courses of the sacred rivers Gaṅgā, Jamuna, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu and Kāverī, at the falls of most of the great streams, such as the Gomukhī, the source of the Ganges in the Himalayas, and of the Kāverī in the dense forests of Karnatak, and also on their mouths on the sea. Wherever a river takes a circuitous course or flows in a northerly direction or again joins another river, and a high scarp or hill overlooks a valley, or a great lake spreads out its pellucid waters, or the plain and the desert meet in vivid contrasts of life and vegetation, we have sacred temples and shrines that must be visited by the pious pilgrims from every part of India.

India herself is the scripture of Indian religion. Pilgrimages to the holy places in different parts of the country are a highly aspired mode of attainment of spiritual bliss. The twelve great liṅgas of Śiva are distributed in every quarter of India including Kedāra in the Himalayas, Rāmeśvara in Setubandha, Mahākāla in Ujjayinī, Viśveśvara in Banaras and Somanātha in Surāshṭra. The sacred temples of the Mother Goddess are as many as fifty-two, each a tīrtha (place of pilgrimage) and holding in the site one of the many fragments of her sacramented

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body cut into pieces by Vishṇu's disc from the shoulders of disconsolate Śiva. Even in far-off Baluchistan Hingula is a sacred Satī-tīrtha. The institution of going round the holy places of India is ancient and was particularly stimulated by Gupta imperialism and re-affirmation of cultural nationalism. The special places of ceremonial oblation to ancestors (śrāddha) are Badrī Nārāyaṇa, Hardwar and Kurukshetra in the north, the sea-shore at Jagannātha in the east and Prabhāsa in the west, Gayā, Prayāga, Pushkara and Amarakaṇṭaka in middle India, and Dhanuṣkoṭi in the extreme south. Here again the whole of India is pictured on the occasion of man's dream beyond life and death. All Indians must visit at least once during their life-time the eternal city of India, Banaras, about three thousand years old, and aspire to lay their bones on its sacred ghat by the Ganges. Here are the temples of Viśveśvara and Annapūrṇā. Banaras is the national resting place of old age and final repose; for he who dies in Śiva's city attains Śiva-hood.

If the eternal city of Śiva and the last rite or cremation at the Ganges Ghat of Maṇikarṇikā are the lure of man in old age from every part of India, the ancient legends of Rāma and Sītā and the pageants of Rāmanavamī come to the whole of India from Ayodhyā as those of Krishna and the festival of Janmāshṭamī come from Mathurā and Brajabhūmi. The worship of Chaṇḍī in spring even connects India with Laṅkā, where Rāmachandra offered his lotus-eye at the feet of the Goddess on the eve of the final encounter with the demon-king Rāvaṇa. Thus is Ceylon included in the geographical synthesis of India. The festivals of India are cyclical in the recurrent procession of the twelve or thirteen moons of the solar year and many of these commemorate the birth of an incarnation of God, a mythical hero, a patron saint or a religious head, or the rise of an important religious or philosophical doctrine, each associated with some region or other in the sub-continent.

The Deep-seated Unity of Indian Civilization

Geographically, the whole of India is brought daily into the cults and faiths of the people, into their ritual ablutions and worship by hymns and prayers, and periodically by the institution of pilgrimage to the sacred cities, rivers, lakes and mountains and the principal temples of gods and goddesses distributed

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in every part of the land. Politically, the unity of India is the aspiration of every monarch who aims at nothing short of becoming the Universal Emperor, Rāja-Chakravartin, with his kingdom stretching up to the shores of the ocean (āsamudra-kshitīśa) and his war-chariot triumphantly reaching the frontiers of heaven (ānākarathavartī). Historically, the Indian man's history and destiny merge into eternity, with its vast cycles of Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali yugas (named from the throws of the Indian game of dice), the ups and downs of civilizations and of Patriarchs (Manus) and Progenitors (Brahmās), and the recurrent triumphs of Righteousness through the advent of the Reincarnations (Vishṇu, Buddha, Tīrthankara or Śakti) when evil is too much with mankind. Sociologically, the organic or spiritual hierarchy of functional groups, roles and vocations (varṇas) is applicable to mankind in general, and is regarded as emanating during Creation from the different limbs of the Universal, Cosmic Man (Purusha). India is divided into vocations, classes and castes, but varṇa is the universal, normative four-fold ordering of society conceived on the basis of degree of culture and sociality, and rooted in the cosmic law of equilibrium or dharma. Metaphysically, the Indian man is universal (vaiśvānara). "The differences of varṇa are not real; the whole world is Brähma (the creation of Brahmā), since it was created by Brahmā in former ages and was evolved into varṇas by occupations", says the Mahābhārata (Śānti Parva, 108-10). The Man Universal is the true, eternal expression of human freedom and equality in India, of justice and goodness in all human relations and institutions, and of sharing, service and solidarity of all groups and classes. The real Universal Man (Viśvātman), the Universal State under a sārvabhauma monarch and the Commonalty of the Universe (Svadeśah-bhuvana-trayam) embody India's endless quest for unity and solidarity in a land marked for its variety of physical conditions, races, customs, languages, social institutions and levels of culture. Neither the spread of Greco-Roman institutions or of Christianity, nor the empires of Augustus, Charlemagne and Napoleon could produce in Europe the deep, underlying unity that is characteristic of India. The unity of civilization is far more potent than what can be produced by the accumulated forces of race and environment, nationalism or political suzerainty. Essentially, India's history in the future lies in

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strengthening and maintaining the integrity of Indian civilization that transcends the diversities of race, language and manners of the different Provinces and States. India, welding together the Provinces and States into a federal democratic Republic, is once again in the course of rebirth. The fulfilment of her history of five thousand years solely depends upon national idealism and ardent faith in the essential unity of Indian civilization and its historic mission on the scene of Asia.

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PART II

THE RISE OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER IV

THE BEGINNINGS OF CIVILIZATION ON THE SINDHU

The Rise of the Indus-Mihran Civilization

One of the cradles of world civilization is the Indus river fringe to which were diverted from pre-historic times drifts of proto-Australoid and perhaps Negrito stocks from the steppes of Asia as these suffered from recurrent drought and over-population. Despite the onset of dry conditions, the last five millennia before Christ showed an abundant rainfall in the Indus valley, as in Egypt and Lower Mesopotamia. It was the orderly succession of seasons, with sunshine following rainfall, the fertility produced by silt deposits of the two rivers, the Indus and the Great Mihran, the facility of irrigation and transport, and the rich variety of animals that were domesticated, that initiated the development of early farming culture in the Indus valley. The Indus valley culture, unearthed as the result of a happy archaeological discovery at a site known as Mohenjo-Daro (Place of the Dead) by R. D. Banerji, goes back to about 3,000 B.C. That this was a key position on the great river is shown by the building of the Lloyd Barrage at Sukkur in its neighbourhood. Many other "dead cities" lie buried under the sands, deserted by one deltaic channel or other of the river at some time in the past. Once the Indus flowed eastward, near the barrage, to discharge itself into the Rann of Cutch. Perhaps the present western course is connected with the drying up of the Hokra and the eastern Nara, which again is linked with the eastering of the Jamuna that had once flowed into the Hokra. Wheat and barley were found at Mohenjo-Daro almost contemporaneously with Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Indus valley was a very important,

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if not the exclusive centre for the domestication of the buffalo, sheep, cattle, elephant, pig, goat, camel, cat and dog. Thus a hundred cities (of which two large and thirty-five small ones have been unearthed so far), with their "autumnal" forts mentioned in the Ṛg-Veda as refuges against inundations, grew up in the Indus-Mihran doab, like the cities of Sumer, representing a complex and brilliant development of ancient agriculture, craft and trade that depended like Mesopotamia upon the annual inundation of the river. Between Sukkur (near the ancient site of Mohenjo-Daro) and Kotri, the Indus traversed a hard limestone tract and hardly meandered, giving the best benefits of its dependable flood and flush irrigation. Elsewhere the meandering of the rivers caused disastrous floods from which many cities on the banks of the Indus, the Ravi and the Sutlej suffered. Throughout the entire region from the Himalayan valley to Southern Baluchistan the monsoon was much heavier and more equable than at present; the forests were more abundant, supplying the wood burnt for millions of bricks for the cities; and the land was moister and more fertile, growing bread-wheat, rice, barley, sesamum, pea, rye and cotton. Spreading over an area covering a thousand miles from the foot of the Simla hills to the Arabian Sea, the Indus valley civilization exhibits a diverse series of cultures, which, according to the archaeologists, Wheeler and Mackay, date back to the Stone Age (perhaps the fifth millennium B.C.) and extend through the so-called Copper or Chalcolithic Age (approximately the fourth millennium) into the Bronze Age of the third millennium and later.

Its Maritime and Commercial Character

The Indus civilization had contacts both by land and sea with the Sumerian and Akkadian civilization in Mesopotamia. A hair-pin with a double spiral head found at Chanhu-Daro resembles pins found on islands of the Aegean Sea. Two seals of the Mohenjo-Daro type have also been found in Elam and Mesopotamia; while a cuneiform inscription of the Euphrates valley has also been discovered at Mohenjo-Daro. The Indian seals found at Sumer belonged mainly to the Akkadian level (2370 B.C.); but a few also were found in pre-Akkadian and post-Akkadian strata. Archaeologists on the basis of the study of pottery in the different layers of the ruins and other evidences consider that

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Quetta, Amri and Zhob preceded the civilization of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. Nal, Shahi Tump, Jhukar and Jhangar were later cultures of the Indus valley. The skilfully fabricated steatite seals, with representations of animals and pictographic writings, are believed to have been used in connection with trade, the seal-cutter having reached almost its perfection. That these seals might have been used for commerce is inferred from the fact, stressed by Hutton, that cotton fabric bearing a seal impressed with an Indus valley stamp has been discovered from a pre-historic site in Iraq. The writings on the seals remain yet undeciphered. It is suggested that the ideograms on the seals represent descriptions of commodities packed in bales which were protected by clay labels bearing imprints of the seals, or names of the traders or guilds; or again these may have a religious significance. F. Horzny puts forward the claim to have interpreted the hieroglyphic seals of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa which have some signs in common with the Hittite hieroglyphics. The seals contain the names of the owner and usually mean seal of— followed by the person's name. Thus the Indus valley people, according to him, belong to the Indo-European Hittite group of people. The Reverend Father Heras thinks that they are Dravidians and has found some clues to the interpretation of the seals. There is also an elaborate system of weights and measures that denotes an advanced stage of industry and commerce. One of the seal-amulets shows a galley or ship that must have been used on the Indus or on the open sea. The Indus valley cities and towns spread from the foot of the Simla hills to the Arabian Sea, covering more than a thousand miles—an area certainly larger than that of the contemporary civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and had continuous trade contacts with the countries of Western Asia and Egypt and with other parts of India, exchanging luxury goods, copper and other metals, and precious stones for clothes and surplus agricultural produce.

Long before the discovery of the Indus civilization Sayce pointed out that the appearance of the word Sindhu for muslin in a Babylonian list of textile goods definitely indicates trade connections between Babylon and the Indus valley as early as 3000 B.C. The distribution of pottery indicates that the trade route lay through near Karachi, where the Hab was crossed, and the coastal region through the Makran and Las Bela, Mehi,

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Sutkagen-dor and the Mula pass. This route was chosen by Alexander of Macedon during his return journey from India after his famous invasion, on the precedents of the previous conquerors, Semiramis and Cyrus, and later on by Arab merchants trading with India. Baluchistan and the Indus region had a much heavier rainfall and population in ancient days than at present. The eastward shift of the south-western monsoon that formerly drenched Persia, Baluchistan, Afghanistan and the Indus basin was gradual, and became marked probably in the middle of this millennium. Gold came to the Indus valley craftsmen for making ornaments from Kolar and Anantapur in South India. According to Mackay: "Stags' horns were brought to the Indus cities from Kashmir; semi-precious amazon-stone came from the latter place or from the far-off Nilgiri hills; jadeite, as Sir Edwin Pascoe suggests, points to communications with Central Asia, and gold with Southern India. Mysore supplied a beautiful green stone of which a cup was found at Mohenjo-Daro; and lapis-lazuli and perhaps a lead-ore, containing silver, were brought from the further regions of Afghanistan." The picture revealed is that of a constant movement of caravans and pack-horses carrying muslins, luxury goods and precious metals and stones between Mesopotamia, Iran and India. This would include the movement of gold, amethyst and amazon-stone from Mysore and the Deccan through the Western Ghats across the Palghat gap to Kathiawar, and thence to Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa; the transport of forest produce, timber, cotton and cereals by river craft down the Jhelum, Ravi, Chenab and Sutlej to the Indus delta; the import of silver, tin, lead and bronze from Persia and Afghanistan; and the export of cloth and surplus agricultural produce, including cotton (called Sindhu by the Babylonians) from Las Bela across Makran and from the deltaic ports by sea up the Persian Gulf to Sumer and Akkad. The foreign trade was lucrative enough to encourage the establishment in Sumer of colonies of merchants from the cities of the Indus valley dealing especially in Indian muslins and art wares. From Harappa on the Ravi, the cities of Bahawalpur on the Sarasvatī and Mohenjo-Daro on the Indus to the trade-towns of Mehi, Dabar Kot and Sutkagen-dor in Baluchistan and Rangpur in Kathiawar and beyond the boundaries of India to Ur, Lagash and Anau, industrial and commercial prosperity was

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writ large on the face of the Indus culture with its uniform commercial code and script and an elaborate system of trade-seals, weights and measures.

Social and Political Structure

The Indus culture shows a careful town-planning with sewage and drainage channels, wells and public swimming and hot-air baths for the common people; while the absence of temples suggests that there was no priestly class as in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Palaces and tombs found in the latter also did not exist in the Indus valley or were indistinguishable from private houses. Strongly fortified citadels have been discovered, however, at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. These indicate both strong, centralised administration and military precaution against attacks, probably from the fierce Ṛg-Vedic Aryan tribes who wore coats of mail and rode on horses, which the people of the Indus culture did not probably possess. In Harappa we find remains of workmen's dwellings built in serried ranks together with working floors and granaries under the protection of the citadel. Commodious granaries or storehouses which constitute arrays of long halls, supported on massive plinths of burnt brick and provided with ventilating passages beneath their timber floors, have been discovered at both Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. These were obviously State granaries that, in the age when all taxes were paid in grains, were scattered throughout the land. Brick architecture was one of the chief glories and gifts of the Indus civilization. The house of the average citizen on the banks of the Indus was as well built and comfortable as that in modern civilization. It was from the Indus valley that the elegantly built domestic structure spread to the cities of Mesopotamia. The bigger size of the cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, as compared with the other thirty-five small towns and villages that have been discovered, as well as the perfection of city design under the direction of expert engineers and architects suggest imperialist centralisation. The latter might have been the outcome of a defensive scheme against the Aryan invaders, and could be easily evolved in the valley due to the easy river transport. The need of security both against military raid and devastating flood is, no doubt, writ large in the city planning in the Indus valley. Violence and slaughter are suggested by the

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discovery of groups of skeletons of men, women and children, with contorted limbs in a large room and at the foot of a staircase at Mohenjo-Daro. Some archaeologists like Wheeler find a complete resemblance between the organisation and lay-out of the cities of the Indus valley and those of Ur or Lagash, with priest-kings or autocratic priesthoods in temple-citadels forming the strong-holds of centralised government on a feudal basis, and surrounded under their protective surveillance by the serried lines of workmen's barracks and work-places. Piggot even speaks of regimented slave-labour in connection with his description of what he characterises as the dreary 'coolie-lines', the great State granaries and the municipal flour-mills, and of one United Indus kingdom with Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro as its northern and southern capitals respectively. The dominance of a priestly-royal organisation, as in the case of the other ancient riparian civilization, cannot, however, be inferred on the basis of existing evidence. The whole matter is as obscure as the pictographic writing which is yet to be deciphered.

Sculpture in the Indus valley shows a high degree of finish and excellence, while a bronze figurine of a dancing girl is a most superb specimen of ancient world art. The human statuary throws light upon the physical, anthropological characteristics—flat cheek bones and noses, low foreheads and narrow eyes, obvious non-Aryan features. Gold, silver, ivory and precious stones used in elaborate ornaments for both sexes, domestic utensils including drinking cups, incised polychrome and glazed pottery, fine fabrics of wool and cotton, artistic terracotta toys for children, and the elaborate coiffure of both men and women, all testify to the development of a highly sophisticated culture.

Contributions of the Indus Civilizations to Indian Religion

The Indus valley culture has contributed certain permanent elements to Indian civilization. There is, first, the worship of the primordial Mother Goddess (bedecked with jewellery), as in Asia Minor and Crete, along with phallus worship (as evidenced by the discovery of a large number of phalli and ring-stones), from which stemmed in India the worship of Śakti in the later centuries. One of the Harappa seals shows the Goddess as nude and upside down with the lotus plant issuing from her navel. This is the prototype of the Earth-goddess Prithvī, Āditi, or

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Śrī-mā of the Vedic Aryans, and of Śrī-Lakshmī, Gaja-Lakshmī and Yakshī that we come across in Bharhut, Sanchi and Orissa caves. The Harappa Mother Goddess seems to have been propitiated by human sacrifice that is portrayed on the obverse of the seal; while another figure, standing amongst the branches of a pipal tree, appears to be the prototype of the later tree-nymph, Yakshī or Vrikshakā. In a railing pillar from Bharhut (in the Allahabad Municipal Museum) we see a Yakshī from whose navel issues forth a lotus stalk. The navel is the seat of all vegetative fertility in ancient Indian myth and art. The earliest Indo-Aryan Mother Goddesses, Śrī and Lakshmī—Beauty and Abundance—described as the twin mistresses of man that we come across in early Indian art have therefore obvious filiations with the Indus valley Mother Goddess that was worshipped for a whole millennium in that region and must have influenced the rise of the Mother cult also in the Ganges valley. This is evidenced by the discovery of ring-stones of hametite from Rajghat, Bhita, Ahichchhatra, Kosam, Mathurā and Pāṭalīputra—all showing a mother deity with alternating tree and animal motifs. The cylindrical seal from Rajghat is of special interest as it represents a bull with a crib in front, similar to the unicorn and crib of the Indus valley. Certain terracottas found in the old North-Western Frontier Province, in Attock in the Punjab and in Kosam in Allahabad, have been compared with the sculptures of Bharhut, Sanchi and Bodh-Gayā. The female religious figures seem to belong to several types, viz., the Universal Mother or Isis type, the Divine Woman or Ishtar and Yakshiṇī type and the personified Yoni or Baubo type. Besides there were also secular figures. These figurines, whether religious or secular, bequeathed by Indus valley and Maurya ages throw a flood of light on the development of ancient Indian religion and sculpture. The Maurya terracotta female figurines unearthed in Northern India from Taxila to Pāṭalīputra especially recall the Harappa Universal Mother type, with exaggerated breasts and hips. There is also a nude god in the posture of meditation with three faces, a pair of horns crossing his head, a fan-shaped headgear or piled up matted lock, and several animals round him. This is believed to be the prototype of Śiva-Paśupati or Śiva as Lord of the Animals. Śiva is three faced (Tryambaka) in Aryan legend and sculpture. The Mohenjo-Daro figure is three faced,

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while its triple horn anticipates the triśūla, and its legs bent double in the padmāsana posture recall the Supreme Yogi. Another figure represents the god as the archer, the prototype of the later Śiva-Kirāta, the deity of the hunting folks. In the Śiva images of the Pallavas in the south, the Mohenjo-Daro pair of horns is met with. The crescent moon on the Purāṇic Śiva's forehead is probably connected with the pair of horns, as in some other ancient cults of Sumer and Babylonia where these denote the deity. It is also noteworthy that the upraised phallus in the Mohenjo-Daro representation is the usual manner in which Śiva as well as Śiva's incarnation, Lakulīśa, were represented in the middle ages in Western and Eastern India. Many figures of clay, obviously representing male deities, have been found at Mohenjo-Daro, which are entirely nude and also wear horns on the head. These may be the Śisna-devāḥ of the Ṛg-Veda, meaning nude gods (gods possessing śisna) of the enemies of the Indo-Aryans. All these male nude figures stand erect. Some standing deities on seals also show the bull in the foreground. Now in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, Śiva is described as completely nude and also as Ūrdhva-liṅga and Sthira-liṅga and the god and the liṅga become identical. The Vāmana Purāṇa describes four sects of Śiva worshippers, viz., those who revere the liṅgam, Paśupati, Mahākāla and the Kapilas. The cults of the liṅgam and Paśupati probably originated in the culture of the Indus valley. A four-armed figure, occurring among the signs of the Indus script, anticipates the four-armed Śiva of the Hindu pantheon. A copper sealing representing a Yogin, with two devotees on the two sides and coiled serpents facing, shows another distinct feature of Śiva, who in Aryan tradition wears serpents. The Harappa image, called the Dancer, also strongly suggests Śiva-Naṭarāja as the Mohenjo-Daro figure suggests Śiva-Paśupati.

The cult of the Vrātyas, referred to in the Atharva-Veda (15th kāṇḍa) as non-sacrificers and worshippers of Eka-vrātya (the Supreme Being, prototype of Śiva), with his associate the Puṁśchali, and wearing woollen apparel and sheep-skins, wielding bows and lances and practising neither agriculture nor trade, seems to belong to the Mohenjo-Daro civilization and was once widespread in India among her indigenous peoples, necessitating Aryan conversion through the Vrātya-stoma ceremony, by performing which groups of Vrātyas became eligible for social inter-

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course with the Āryas and ceased to be Vrātyas, as Kātyāyana observed. It is the aboriginal folks, the non-sacrificing Vrātyas, regarded in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas as outcastes, vagrants and mixed peoples, who perhaps have given to the country the universal institution of Vrata or religious ritual or vow, as mentioned by Āpastamba. It was probably in the Gupta period that the social absorption of the Vrātyas and introduction of the Vrata rites into Brahmanism were completed.

The people of the Indus valley as well as the Vrātyas were worshippers of the liṅgam, the generative male energy of the universe, symbolic of Śiva. Both the male symbol of the liṅgam and its counterpart, the primordial nude goddess with lotus in her hair, are found at Mohenjo-Daro, embodying two main currents of worship and ritual of later India. Similarly the huge tank found in the centre of the city of Mohenjo-Daro is probably the prototype of the holy bathing tanks of Hinduism of the later ages.

Finally, there is evidence in the Indus valley of the worship of spirits of trees and animals which gave rise to later Apsarā, Nāga and Yaksha cults. The aśvattha and neem are among the sacred trees in the Indus valley, and in one seal-amulet the deity presiding over such trees is actually represented as a horned goddess. Another horned deity makes obeisance to her, while behind him is a goat with a human face. The bull, the tiger, the buffalo and the goat are all sacred animals (probably vāhanas or vehicles of deities) with a food-vessel or altar usually represented before them in the seal-amulets. The snake also seems to have been an object of veneration. The cults of the Mother Goddess, of the three-faced Lord of Animals, of the yoni and liṅga, of the powerful bull and snake, of the fig tree and of the streams have all come down from the religion of the ancient Indus plains. The Atharva-Veda definitely mentions the cults of the aśvattha tree, the serpent and Eka-vrātya, and gives an account of a variety of magic and sorcery—all of non-Aryan origin and significance.

Inter-relations between the Indus and Sarasvati Cultures

Descriptions in the Ṛg-Veda of the Asuras, Dāsas or Dasyus as people of dark blood (kṛṣṇa-garbha), snub-nosed (anāsa), of strange hostile speech (drogha-vāchah, mṛdhravāk), not following rituals

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and sacrifices (akarman, ayajvan) and worshipping the phallus (śisnadevāḥ) and stupid gods (mūradevāḥ) refer to the Indus valley inhabitants. Mention is also made of their towns and forts, a hundred in number, of their autumnal fortifications as refuges against inundations of rivers and of their knowledge of iron (ayas) and the arts of spinning and weaving. There is also mention of the Matsyas or the Mīnas (who participated in the battle of the Ten Kings), Śimyus, Kīkaṭas, Ajas, Yakshus, Chumuri, Pipru, Varchin and Śaṁbara. There had been chronic conflicts between the Indus and Sarasvatī civilizations. The Vedic Aryan God-king, Indra, obtained the designation of the Sacker of Cities (Purandara) and subjugated the non-Aryans by the aid especially of the horse as the war animal and of the sword and the battle chariot. The civilization of the Indus was more widespread and deep-rooted than the contemporary, less extensive, sister civilization of the Sarasvatī. Its worship of the Mother Goddess and Śiva, and of the sex-organs, liṅgam and yoni, as contrasted with the Vedic Aryan deities of Indra, Varuṇa and all the rest materially enriched the Indo-Aryan religious beliefs and practices. The ubiquitous worship of the sexual principle, of the phallus and Mother Goddess, of trees, serpents and animals, yoga exercise as well as faith in charms and amulets, all came from the Indus people. The use of cloth in apparel, handloom weaving, the form of the ox-cart, the domestication of many animals, including the elephant, many tools of arts and crafts, the glyptic art as well as the pattern of city and village planning were also among their precious gifts to Indian civilization. They were a peaceful, commercial people having their big cities mostly undefended by walls and fortifications and possessing but a poor equipment of arms and weapons that could be of no avail against those of war-like neighbours, such as the Ṛg-Vedic Aryans. The constant invasions and attacks of the Aryans, the incursions of the Mediterranean race, coming by the pre-historic Makran route, as indicated by the recent discovery of forts to the west of the Indus river, the recurrence of drought and flood, the change in the courses of the Indus and the Mihran due to forest destruction (the cities demanding fuel for the use of burnt brick), the decline of fertility and desiccation (as evidenced by the disappearance from the region of such ancient wet-region animals as the elephant, rhinoceros, tiger and buffalo) are probably

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responsible for the decay and final ruin of the Indus valley civilization. Archaeologists generally affirm that the Indus civilization reached its zenith round about 3000 B.C., was progressively declining during the latter half of the second millennium, and was finally eclipsed, probably at the hands of the invading Aryans, according to Sir John Marshall, not long after 2000 B.C. A definitely alien culture represented by Cemetery H burials with their bright-red wares is superimposed upon the ruins of Harappa; while at Chanhu-Daro two distinct cultures, viz. Jhukar and Jhangar, overlaid in succession the Harappa culture. It is suggested by Childe that the Cemetery H culture superimposed upon the latest levels of the Mohenjo-Daro-Harappa culture belongs to the Aryan invaders. Such is the obscure story of the rise and fall of the earliest civilization of India extending over a vast region from the East Punjab to Southern Baluchistan and Kathiawar revealed by mounds and debris, seals and terracottas.

Did the Indus valley culture, apart from its bloody contacts with the Ṛg-Vedic Aryans, remain isolated from the currents of culture of the Ganges basin? Evidence is not so sufficient. Along the dead course of the ancient Ṛg-Vedic river, the Sarasvatī, now the dry bed of the Ghaggar in Bahawalpur and Bikaner, certain Harappa settlements have been recently discovered, obviously pointing to the close proximity between Harappa and Ṛg-Vedic cultures. A chalcolithic city of the third millennium B.C. has been discovered in the eastern part of the Ganges valley near Patna at Buxar at a site 52 feet below the earth's surface and 13 feet below the Mauryan strata. Two types of terracottas have been found: crude, showing affinity with Sumer and the Indus valley, and delicate and finished, comparable with the pre-Sumerian Enidu and the Aegean. The figurines of the Mother Goddess are in particular similar to those from Mohenjo-Daro and Crete. The universality of the cults of the Universal Mother and Rudra-Śiva points to the Harappa heritage. Hence, near the first home-land of the Aryans in India and almost covering the track of their expansion towards the east, at the close of the Harappa Age, the Harappa people, for whom they might have employed the ancient imagery of the Dasyus, Asuras and "ruddy" Piśāchas and Rākshasas, came into both sanguinary and peaceful contact

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with them across forgotten centuries. Both archaeology and early history must now endeavour to forge the missing links between the Harappa civilization and Indo-Aryan civilization. A rich and hitherto neglected field lies open especially for the explorers of the valleys and dry-beds of such ancient rivers as the Sutlej, Sarasvatī, Drishadvatī and Ganges in their upper courses.

Social anthropologists can point to several clear evidences of the extension of the Indus valley civilization to the Madhyadeśa and the Ganges valley. Indian culture in the millenniums B.C. was a part of a vast ancient, pulsating current of civilization, extending from the Levant to the Ganges with a common stock of cults of the sun and the fire, of the bull and the snake, the phallus and the Mother Goddess, symbols, art motifs and material inventions and discoveries in which Egypt, Sumer and the Indus valley alternately participated in the different epochs. H. C. Ray Chaudhuri traces a close parallelism between Rudra-Śiva of India and Teshub, the chief male deity worshipped by the ancient Hittites in Western Asia in the second millennium B.C. Teshub rides a bull and holds a trident and mace like Śiva. His consort is the Mother Goddess, the Mā of Cappadocia. She rides a lioness or panther like the spouse of Śiva (Siṁhavāhinī). There is also a curious similarity between Nanania and Artemis of Ephesus and Susa having the bee for her symbol like the Brahmāri form of the Mother Goddess in India. Similarly, megalithic monuments and marriage customs, not unsuggestive of Babylon, and of fertility rites which are Phaphian, all seem to indicate the infiltration into the broader plains of the Ganges of the social and economic order associated with the culture of the Indus that in its turn looks for its origins to a common racial and cultural background, Mediterranean and Armenoid.

It is the great Mediterranean race (the Dāsas and Dasyus of the Vedic Age), speaking the Dravidian languages, that coming in wave after wave of migration before the advent of the Indo-Aryans introduced a high civilization into India. Their wheat-farming, domestication of animals, handicrafts and luxury industries, weaving, city development and architecture, navigation and commerce greatly impressed the Aryans who had never known urban life. Dravidian place-names are found in Mesopotamia, and the Brahuis of Baluchistan use a Dravidian language.

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The numerous megaliths of the Deccan, related to metallic deposits, have a close resemblance with the analogous remains toward the Pacific on the one hand, and in Thrace and the Caspian Sea region on the other. Wheeler's recent surveys show that stone-axes and microliths occur almost exclusively to the south and east of a line from Cambay to Lucknow and that the principal focus of the megalithic culture was the Deccan, especially south of the Godāvarī river. According to Haimendorf the megalithic culture of North-eastern India has a South-east Asian rather than Western filiation. The land-route from Mesopotamia through Iran, Afghanistan and Baluchistan to India as well as the maritime route along the coast of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea were probably used by the Dravidians and the occurrence of dolmens and kist-væns in Cochin indicates, as Gilbert Slater has pointed out, their use of the Palghat gap in the Western Ghats. The major Dravidian contributions to Indian civilization include rice agriculture and irrigation, domestication of the water-buffalo, use of iron, sea-fishing, spinning and weaving, mining and metal work. All these contributed towards a great increase of population, as is evident from the discovery of about a million pre-historic sites in the Deccan alone. The worship of the Mother Goddess and of a god like Śiva or Teshub links the Deccan civilization with that of the Near and Middle East. The incised marks on light pottery, discovered in the Hyderabad cairns, are identical with the symbols found in use in Minoan Crete; while a bronze statuette of the Mother Goddess discovered at Adi-chanallar corresponds to the clay figurines of the Mother Goddess found in large numbers at Mohenjo-Daro and worshipped extensively in the ancient civilized world from the Mediterranean to the shores of the Indian Ocean. Many scholars are of opinion that it is the same Dravidian peoples who had settled in South India that later on built up the Indus valley civilization which once extended from Seistan to the Ganges valley and from the foot-hills of Simla to Kathiawar and Rajputana. It seems probable, that a previous wave of migration of the Mediterranean race had reached the Deccan several centuries before the settlement on the banks of the Indus and the rise of the Sumerian civilization, and at least a millennium before the influx of the Indo-Aryans. Other scholars are of opinion that the megalithic culture of the Deccan is far removed

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in time from that of Europe (about 2500 B.C. to 1500 B.C.) although the structural similarity between the monuments of the two regions especially the port-holes cannot be doubted. More exploration and research can alone reveal the genesis and the date of the different types of megalithic monuments of South India, where megalithic culture continued right up to the middle of the first century A.D. There is a correlation between megalithism and mother-right, which indicates according to Ehrenfels that the former must have reached India not only in a series of cultural drifts but also from both the West and the East.

An earlier social stratum in India is represented by the great Proto-Australoid race (the Niṣādhas of the Vedic Aryans) speaking the Mundari languages, which spread from its original habitat in the eastern part of the Ganges valley to Further India, Indonesia and Polynesia. Its modern representatives in India are represented by the Santhals, Bhils, Mundas, Hos, Kurumbas and other tribal groups. The major contributions of the Munda-speaking peoples to Indian civilization include the village Panchayat system, the agrarian distribution under the scattered field system and the equalisation of agricultural and grazing rights in the village community, the organisation of watch and ward as well as the allotment of lands for village officials, artisans and servants, the reservation of plots of land for the worship of local godlings, the local jurisdiction of the assemblies of groups of five and ten to a hundred villages, and collective hunting, fasting and pūjā of tree and mountain spirits located in secluded village groves and reserved forest trees. There were also infiltrations in different ages of the Mongolians from Tibet and China through Annam and Burma and of the Melanesians from Indo-China. They are the Kirātas of the Vedic Aryans as mentioned in the Yajur-Veda and the Atharva-Veda, inhabitants of mountains and caves. They are described in the Mahābhārata as the forest-dwellers of the Himalayas and in the Vishṇu Purāṇa as the barbarians living to the east of Bhārata-varsha. On the evidence of Indian skulls Sewell and Guha establish that "it would seem probable that the Mediterranean stock had become established in Northern India at a period that clearly antedates the civilization at Nal and along the Indus Valley, and differences that have been shown to exist between the human remains at Anau, Kish and Nal indicate that a sufficient length of time had elapsed for certain

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local variations to have become evolved and established". The civilization of the Indus plains was cosmopolitan as can be deduced from the investigations of the two anthropologists, according to whom no less than four different races can be identified in this region—the Proto-Australoid, Mediterranean, Mongolian and Alpine. Both racial stock and culture formed a vast continuous current that ebbed and flowed from the Mediterranean to the valleys of the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Indus, the Mihran, the Sarasvatī and the Ganges well-nigh from the Stone Age.

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CHAPTER V

THE VEDIC CIVILIZATION ON THE SARASVATĪ

The Home of the Aryas—the Sarasvati-Drishadvati Doab

Though the Indus (the Sindhu) gave the name to India, the ideological pattern of Indian civilization is derived from the culture of the Ṛg-Vedic Aryans or Āryas, who gradually spread from Asia Minor and Iran over Afghanistan, the Punjab, the Ganges-Jamuna doab and the land watered by the Sarayū, the Varuṇā and the Sadānīrā (Gandak). The heart of this Aryan world was bounded on the west by the Sarasvatī and in the east by the Drishadvatī and the Apāyā (or Apāgā, a river in Kurukshetra, according to the Vāmana Purāṇa) and was called the Brahmāvarta. The Sarasvatī is a fragment of the great middle tertiary Indo-Brahm river, which once flowed into the Tethys Sea that withdrew after the first phase of the Himalayan upheaval. For millions of years the Sarasvatī, rising from the Himalayan range, collected the waters of Northern India and flowed south-west for discharge into the Gulf of Cutch independently of the Indus system. Vedic literature, indeed, describes the Sarasvatī, the Indus and the Sutlej as flowing into the sea. (Ṛg-Veda, vi, 61, 28, vii, 95, 2). The Mahābhārata also mentions Pravaṣa in the west as the goal of the Sarasvatī, the river's confluence with the sea being regarded as a most sacred place of pilgrimage. In Gujarat near Somnath there is a river called Rauṇākshī which is another name for the Sarasvatī, according to the Vāmana Purāṇa. It is called Prabhāsa-Sarasvatī and is identical with the Prāchī-Sarasvatī or the Kurukshetra-Sarasvatī, which in ancient times flowed through Prabhāsa. The saṅgam of the Sarasvatī is in fact identified with the Kapilāśrama Siddhapur in Gujarat. The Ṛg-Veda not only describes the Sarasvatī as a mighty river (maho-arṇaḥ) and the foremost river (nadītamā) and differentiates this river from the Sapta-Sindhu system, but also refers to the seven-fold Sarasvatī (Sarasvatī Saptathī)

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mother of the rivers (Sindhumātā) or the seven-sistered river (Saptasvasā). In the Śukla Yajur-Veda, however, we have a reference to the five-fold river system of the Sarasvatī (Pañcha-srotaḥ Sarasvatī). In the Zendavesta there is a reference to Hapta-Hendu as a place of habitation of the Iranian Aryans. This is obviously Sapta-Sindhu—the land of the Seven Rivers, a phrase which occurs also in the Ṛg-Veda and which is the sacred home of the Indo-Aryans. The Mahābhārata, Śalya Parva, refers to seven branches of the Sarasvatī—Sapta-Sarasvatām—viz., the Suprabhā in Pushkar, Bimalodaka in the Himalayas, Sureṇu in Haridvāra, Oghavatī in Kurukshetra, Manoramā in Kośala, Bisālā in Gayā and Kāñchanākshī in Naimishāraṇya. Ancient India, where the Aryans were transformed into Indians, was not the Punjab but the Sapta-Sindhu, the Region of the Seven Rivers, viz., the Sarasvatī with its associated streams. The Ādiparva of the Mahābhārata lists the seven rivers as follows: Sarasvatī, Drishadvatī, Gaṅgā, Jamuna, Apāyā (Apāgā), Sarayū, Gomatī and Gaṇḍakī. Another list of the Seven Rivers is Irāvatī (Ravi), Chandrabhāgā (Chenab), Vitastā (Jhelum), Vipāśā (Beas), Śutudri (Sutlej), Sindhu (Indus) and Sarasvatī. It is possible that the Sarayū (Haraju, modern Harirud), Gomatī (modern Gomal) and Gaṇḍakī (not identified) are rivers of Afghanistan and not the familiar Indian streams. On the whole the Seven Rivers (Sapta-Sindhu) should be either the seven streams of the Sarasvatī as mentioned in the Ṛg-Veda and the Śalya Parva of the Mahābhārata, or the five streams of the Sarasvatī referred to in the Atharva-Veda, together with the Ganges and the Jamuna. Between the Vedic and the Gupta epoch vast changes in the river-system, especially connected with the Sarasvatī, took place, making it difficult for the Epics and the Purāṇas to identify precisely the Sarasvatī and related rivers and the holy region of Brahmāvarta associated with the efflorescence of Ṛg-Vedic culture. Vātsyāyana in his Kāmasūtra refers to only six rivers of the Punjab—the Indus and its five tributaries, the Sarasvatī having disappeared by his time (3rd century A.D.). The entry of the Sarasvatī into the subterranean region is referred to by the Mahābhārata in one place—"Yatra Meruprishthe Sarasvatī". Both the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas roughly locate the Sarasvatī as the northern boundary and the Drishadvatī as the southern boundary of Kurukshetra (Sthāṇutīrtha or Śthāneśvara), where the Bhāratas found their place together

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with their old enemies, the Purus, within the heterogenous ensemble of tribes called the Kurus or Kuru Pāñchālas.

The Sarasvatī identified with the Ghaggar, now lost in the sands of Rajputana, the Drishadvatī or the modern Chitrang and the Sindhu are the rivers mentioned most frequently in the Ṛg-Vedic hymns. (Excavations of selected sites on the banks of these two ancient rivers may reveal the essential features of early Aryan civilization just as those on the banks of the Indus brought to light a civilization that preceded the former by at least one millennium. Excavations at Hastināpura and other 'Mahābhārata' sites have already unearthed painted grey pottery dating back from 2000 B.C. to 300 B.C.). On the other hand the proximity of the Indus valley culture to the Ṛg-Vedic is indicated by the sites of Rupar in Ambala due north of Kurukshetra and of Saudhanawala and about ten other places in Bahawalpur along the ancient course of the Sarasvatī (the dead beds of the Ghaggar and Hokra). The Ṛg-Veda mentions of course the five rivers of the Punjab, viz., the Vitastā (Jhelum), Asiknī (Chenab), Parushṇī (Irāvatī or Ravi), Vipāśā (Beas) and Śutudri (Sutlej). Beyond these on the east the rivers mentioned are the Gaṅgā, Jamuna, Gomatī and Sarayū, representing the eastern limits of Vedic culture, that had its focus in the region between the Sarasvatī and the Drishadvatī. The Bhāratas are described as settled in the region of the Sarasvatī, Apāyā and Drishadvatī and thence advancing to the Vipāśā and Śutudri. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions the Sadānīrā as a river situated between Videha and Kośala. This is identified with the Gandak and was the limit of the Aryan colonisation in the east at the time when Yājñavalkya composed the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. The famous river-hymn (nadī-stuti) in the Ṛg-Veda begins with Gaṅgā, Jamuna and Sarasvatī and the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa also refers to the Gaṅgā.

The modern Ganges appeared ages after the completion of the Himalayan upheaval as the severed part of the Indo-Brahm river and during early historical times captured the transversely running Sarasvatī which became the Jamuna. This river capture is indicated by the ancient tradition of the Sarasvatī losing herself in the nether world and her assumption of the name of Ghaggar for at least a part of her course. The earliest reference to the vanishing of the Sarasvatī is to be found in the Pañchavimśa Brāhmaṇa (XXV, 10, 6). The Mahābhārata and the

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Manusmṛti mention the disappearance of the Sarasvatī in the sands at Vināśana-tīrtha, near Sirsa (ancient Sarasvatī-nagara) in the Punjab. The Mahābhārata observes that after disappearance the Sarasvatī appears again at three places, viz., Chamāsodbheda, Sirodbheda and Nāgodbheda. Several hymns of the Ṛg-Veda are reminiscent of upheavals of land and mountain and new courses of rivers carved out by Indra, who is said to split the mountains which tremble at his might.

The whole system of rivers connected with or related to the Sarasvatī, the Drishadvatī and the Śutudri (Sutlej) has been completely transformed. Within the period of history the Sarasvatī and the Ghaggar (or Gharghar which was the lower part of the Sarasvatī or its principal tributary) united with the Sutlej to form the great lost river of Northern India, called the Sotrā, Hokra or Wahindah, which separated Āryāvarta from the Indus valley. Much later the same river, which streamed through Bahawalpur and the Sind desert into the Indus, served as a political boundary of the Gurjara-Pratihāra Empire. It seems to have finally dried out of existence in the 18th century and its skeleton remains can still be traced in the sands from Bhatnair to the Indus.

The doab of the Sarasvatī and the Drishadvatī was much more important and holier in the Vedic Age than the Ganges-Jamuna doab. The doab of the Bharatas was, indeed, the stronghold of Aryan settlement, the seat *par excellence* of Vedic culture, "the land of the gods", as described by Manu. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa sings the praises of Bharata. King Bharata performs the Rājasūya sacrifice. He offers gifts of many elephants in the region of Marsāna. In the region of Śuchiguṇa he introduces Agni, who is the priest of the Bharatas (Brāhmaṇa-bharata). On the banks of the Jamuna, he performs 78 Aśvamedha sacrifices, and on the banks of the Ganges, in a place called Bṛtraghna, he instals 55 sacrificial posts. The easterly doab of the Ganges and the Jamuna was settled later by the Indo-Aryan colonists, as is evident from the reference to the victories of Bharata Daushanti on these two rivers in both the Aitareya and Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa contains also a myth referring to the spread of Brahmanical culture eastwards from the banks of the Sarasvatī in the west up to Videha across the Sadānīrā. Kośala, Kāśī, Magadha and Videha

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became gradually important seats of Vedic culture. Videha, under King Janaka and the sages Yājñavalkya, Śvetaketu, Udānka Śaulbāyana and Satyakāma Jābāla, was the eastern frontier of Vedic culture.

Their Original Home-land

The Aryan expansion began somewhere from Central Asia about the middle of the third millennium B.C. when a dry climatic period had set in. Bands of Aryans from the open grass-lands in Asia traversed westward and invaded the central European loess areas and the coasts of the North Sea. They were nomad horsemen and pastoralists and their most important contributions to the culture of Europe were the horse and the wheeled vehicle. The first historic invasions of Media, Elam, Syria and Babylonia from the steppes and elsewhere are placed from 1700 to 1500 B.C., produced by the southward swing of the climatic zones. It was also in the middle of the second millennium B.C. that the horse, the war-chariot and the sword brought the Aryan invaders from the steppe lands into the plains of the Indus and the Ganges. In India the mailed Aryan warriors (Varminaḥ) riding on "bright prancing horses" encountered an old civilization based on both rural and urban life, and destroying cities and towns (acclaiming their chief war-god Indra as Purabhid, 'breaker of strongholds') and establishing castes and religious aristocracies, Aryanised it; while in Europe they could not lift the peoples out of savagery. The old civilization did not get so far ahead in Europe save round the Aegean Sea due to difficulties of climate and soil, of forest and marsh. North of the Aegean men for ages did not get beyond the state of living in villages. "There is a difference of nearly 4000 years between the age of the first cities of India and the Aegean on the one hand, and the age of the earliest cities of Europe further north", observes Fleure. Certain tablets of about 1400 B.C. discovered at Boghaz Koi, the capital of the ancient Hittites, and other places in Asia Minor contain references to kings who bore Aryan names and invoked the Ṛg-Vedic gods, Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa and the two Nāsatyas. These gods are also mentioned in the Avesta as witness of a treaty. Scholars have concluded that these were the common gods of the undivided Aryans prior to their separation as Ṛg-Vedic Aryans and Iranians. Certain inscriptions

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in distant Anatolia mention Indra and other Vedic gods. There is reminiscence in the Ṛg-Veda of an "ancient home-land" where Indra was worshipped by the fore-fathers of the Vedic hymn-singers. The connection of Indra with countries far distant from the land of the five tribes is also clearly indicated by some texts. Aryan place-names were used by the Kassites (about 1600 B.C.) who dwelt between Iran and Chaldea. Islands of Aryan speech "were thus scattered far and wide in the Euro-Asiatic plateau." It was through Iran that the Ṛg-Vedic Aryans brought their culture and religion as well as their language into India in and after the fifteenth century B.C. Several Vedic scholars hold that certain Ṛg-Vedic hymns, especially the sixth maṇḍala, were composed when the Aryans occupied parts of Iran and locate in this territory Divodāsa's conflict with the Paṇis identified with the Parnians of Strabo. They identify also the Dāsas with the Dahae, the Pārāvatas with the Parauti of Ptolemy and the Brishaya with the Brasacutus of Arrian in Arachosia. A few other tribal identifications may be mentioned: the Parsus are the Persians; the Pārthavas are the Parthians; the Mitajñu are the Mitānnī; the Kesis are the Kassi or Kassites and the Pakhthas are the Pakhthuns. It is clear that the region which the Tritsu family of the Bharata tribe occupied, after severe fighting with other tribal groups on the route to India, comprised Iran, Arachosia, Afghanistan and the Punjab, the Sapta-Sindhus or Sindhus. At least three tribes of Afghanistan specifically are mentioned in the Ṛg-Veda: the Pakhthas, the Gāndhāras and the Mūjavants.

The Contest Between the Aryas and the Indus People

In the long march to the plains of the Indus there was bitter conflict between the Āryas and the Dāsas or Dasyus. There was also struggle between the Āryas and Āryas with the Dāsas as allies on both sides. The Dāsas or Dasyus are the Dahae of the Caspian steppe, and probably belonged to the Iranian group. "Ye smote and slew the Dāsas and Ārya enemies and protected Sudās with your succour, O Indra-Varuṇa." It is bemoaned that Indra killed Arna and Chitṛavatha on the yonder side of the Sarayū, although they were Āryas. The Bharatas who were the most famous among the Aryan clans were settled in the region of the Sarasvatī, Apāyā and Drishadvatī. It is mentioned that their advance to the Vipāśā and Śutudri took place under Rishi

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Viśvāmitra. They seem to have been led by the Tritsu branch under King Sudāsa, the hero of the battle of the Ten Kings (daśa-rājña) that was fought on the Paruṣṇī (Ravi). His grandfather Divodāsa fought the Paṇis, the Pārāvatas and the Brishayas, tribal groups located in Arachosia. It was under the leadership of the Bharatas that the first unified Indo-Aryan rāshṭra or state was built up with the various clans such as the Purus, Krivis, Turvaśas and Śriñjayas, some of whom had fought with one another, completely integrated into a confederacy. The Bharata king was the supreme head and protector, receiving tribute (bali) from all. Thus the empire of the Bharatas, like the later empire of Darius, extended in the course of several centuries from Iran to the Punjab. In the Ṛg-Veda the abode of the demon Vṛtra is described as near the Sindhu (Indus). Indra, Vṛtrahan, killed Vṛtra and released the rain-clouds which then swelled the rivers. May it indicate that the monsoon clouds first drenched the enemy country—the Indus valley—before they crossed over to the Punjab inhabited by the Indo-Aryans, as they actually did in those times? Vṛtra (literally one who holds back the flow of waters in the skies and streams) is also described in the Vedic texts in the form of a snake which was an object of worship of the Indus valley people. May not Vṛtra, "the obstructor of rivers", symbolise the control of the Dāsas over the river-system of the Punjab, which the Aryan war-lord, Indra, ends after a mighty struggle? Indra "sets free the rivers' paths; all banks of the rivers yield to his manly might." (Ṛg-Veda II, 13.) Thus the network of the Punjab water-courses was released for the benefit of the Indo-Aryan agricultural economy from the domination of the non-Aryan urban dwellers. Indra, whose "chariots of wrath the deep thunder clouds form", who regulates the rain-clouds, streams and floods, and who liberating the waters after killing Vṛtra stands amidst the raging torrents firm like a mountain, is thus the giver of wealth for the Vedic Aryans. "The mighty roaring flood he stayed from flowing, and carried those who swam not safely over. They having crossed the stream attained to riches." (Ṛg-Veda, II, 15.) The "golden treasure" which Indra brought to his people soon after their earlier invasion of the Punjab was the gift of the monsoons and rivers. Again, Indra "slaughtered Vala and burst apart the defences of the mountain: he tore away their deftly built defences". May not these refer

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to the Aryan destruction of the strongly built, massive embankments that protected the Indus valley cities so that the torrents swallowed up the enemy populations. There is in the Ṛg-Veda a distinct reference to the Turvaśas whom Indra brought from a distant land, and who moved about the banks of the Paruṣṇī (Ravi), fighting on behalf of the local enemy people called the Vṛchīvants. The latter broke the sacrificial vessels and were annihilated. The Vṛchīvants and Turvaśas were given over by Indra, "the lord of bright prancing horses", to the Śriñjayas led by a Pārthava or Parthian prince. The Vṛchīvants are further described as "located on the Hariyupia". The emperor Abhyavartin is king of Hariyūpīā and is called the Pārthava. He defeats the Vṛchīvants on the banks of the river Yavyāvatī and kills their commander Varasikha. The Yavyāvatī is the river Zhob, the tributary of the Gomal (the Gomatī of the Ṛg-Veda). Could Hariyūpīā be identified with Harappa (a modern name) as some scholars suggest? In that case the contest between the Indus and the Ṛg-Vedic civilization and the resultant Parthian domination of the Indus valley are clearly indicated.

The March from the Sapta-Sarasvati to the Sadanira

The course of expansion of Aryan culture is evidenced by the rivers mentioned during their migration and colonisation: first, the rivers of Afghanistan, viz., the Sarayū (Avestic Harayū, Hari Ruda), the Sarasvatī (Avestic Harahvāiti, later Arkhvati, Arghandab), the Kubhā (Kabul), the Krumu (Kurrum), the Gomatī (Gomal) and the Suvāstu (Swat); second, the rivers of the Punjab, viz., the Sindhu (Indus), the Sushoma (Sohan), the Vitastā (Jhelum), the Asiknī (Chenab), the Marutvṛdha (Maruwardwan), the Paruṣṇī (Ravi), the Vipāśā (Beas) and the Śutudri (Sutlej); third, the Sarasvatī and the Drishadvatī (the Rakshī or the Chitang) whose doab, the home of the Bharatas, was later called "the firm middle land (Dhruva Madhyama dis)"; and finally the eastern rivers, the Jamuna, the Gaṅgā, the Sarayū, the Varaṇavatī and the Sadānīrā (modern Gandak). Many rivers and streams were crossed by the Vedic Aryans as they spread themselves over the vast open plains. This is evident from the famous ancient Ṛg-Vedic river-hymn: "O ye Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Śutudri and Paruṣṇī: receive ye my prayers: O ye Marutvṛdha, joined by Asiknī, Vitastā and Arijīkiyā joined by Sushomā,

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hear ye my prayers." The Sarayū marks the easternmost frontier of Ṛg-Vedic and the Sadānīrā of later Vedic culture. Pargiter identifies the Sadānīrā with the Rāptī, and not with the Gandak. Beyond its ambit lay half Aryanised, half non-Aryan Magadha and Aṅga—"distant lands" according to the Atharva-Veda which associates the Māgadhas with the Vrātyas. From the banks of the Sarasvatī the Bharatas, "whose greatness neither the men before nor thereafter them attained", expanded to the east under the leadership of king Divodāsa and Sudāsa and the inspiration of the leaders or priest-kings Vaśiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra. They, crossed the Jamuna and carried on campaigns against the Dāsas, the Śūdras and the Kirātas, indigenous peoples of the eastern portion of the Ganges basin who were slowly and gradually displaced. One tradition refers to the advance of the Bharatas down the Ganges to Kāśī. The principal opposition in the Ṛg-Veda is between the Āryas and the Dāsas or Dasyus. "Distinguish well between the Āryas and those who are Dasyus, devoid of sacred rites, chastising them subject them to the sacrificer." The Dāsas or Dasyus included the foreigners, such as the Dahae as well as Indian barbarians who were not acquainted with the Ārya rites. In the Atharva-Veda, the Āryas and the Śūdras came in for some similar contrast, the Śūdras denoting first an aboriginal tribe (Śudra-abhirāma) and then, as Dr. Bhandarkar suggests, any people who had not adopted the essential feature of the Aryan Brahmanic culture, viz., the varṇāśrama-dharma. From the Sapta-Sarasvatī to the Sadānīrā was a long arduous march of the Vedic Aryans. Among their gods and goddesses were included Sarasvatī, who was at the beginning a river deity and was worshipped later as the Goddess of Wisdom. The Sarasvatī, the river of the Bharatas, is constantly mentioned in connection with Bhāratī, the personified divine protective power of the Bharatas. The Bharatas and the land of the Drishadvatī and the Sarasvatī (later on known as Kurukshetra), where they dwelt, themselves became sacred, as the God Agni and the Goddess Bhāratī became their protectors. Agni Vaiśvānara travels eastward from the river Sarasvatī. Rivers cross his path but Agni burns on across all the streams. After Agni follow the Prince Videgha Māthava and the Brāhmaṇa Gotama Rāhūgaṇa. Thus they reach the river Sadānīrā, which, however, is not crossed. The Aryan expansion is vividly expressed in the following hymn of the

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Atharva-Veda: "Let the country make for us wide room; let the country be spread out for us, be prosperous for us." There was also experienced a profound joy of living with the feast of life spread out for "hundred autumns" and more. "Let the wind waft sweet, the streams pour sweet for one that keeps to the righteous path. Let the plants be sweet to us. Sweet be the night, the dawn and the dust of the earth, and sweet be the father Heaven. May the lordly trees bring sweet, and sweet be the Sun. May the quarters of the earth be full of sweetness to us." Thus runs a famous hymn. The spread of the Aryans to the quarters of the earth was symbolically the extension of the suzerainty of Sarasvatī or Bhāratī, the goddess of the Bharatas. The Aryans were nomadic in the Kṛta Yuga, we learn from a passage in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. With each expansion of settlement and culture, the country of the Bharatas (Bhāratī-saṅtiti) or Āryas covered successively the following regions in ever-widening ambits: Sapta-Sindhu, Brahmāvarta, Brahmarshi-deśa, Madhyadeśa, Āryāvarta and Jambu-dvīpa or Bhārata-varsha. Sumanta mentions: "Brahmāvarta is the holy land proper; next to it is Rishideśa (Brahmarshideśa); inferior to that is Madhya-deśa; and last is Āryāvarta." The holiest territory of the Aryans in the two centuries before and after Christ was singled out as Brahmāvarta lying between the Sarasvatī and Drishadvatī; the region next to it was Brahmarshideśa. The Mānava Dharma-śāstra, the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, all extolled the glory of the land which saw the rise of the Divine Society. But the age of the Imperial Guptas witnessed a more significant expansion of the geographical horizon of the land and culture than that associated with the shift of interest from Sapta-Sindhavaḥ to Brahmā-varta or Kurukshetra or Antarveda. Jambu-dvīpa was the island continent of which Bhārata-varsha was an integral unit. But after the establishment of the Mauryan Empire the continent was recognised to be within the sphere of Bhārata-varsha from the third century B.C. onwards. Bhārata-varsha or the land of Bharatas was the home-land of Aryan culture in the spacious golden age of Gupta imperialism embracing a large portion of the Asian continent, and including certain territories beyond the Himalayas in the north-west, inhabited by the Yavanas (Ionians or Greeks) and the islands of the Indian Ocean (Dvīpāntara Bhārata or Island India). Thus the denotation of India,

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identified with the spiritual culture of the Āryas, changed through the epochs since Bhārata was the culture and the culture Bhārata.

The mention of a few other tribes in the Ṛg-Veda roughly indicates the limits of expansion of Vedic culture: the Matsyas and the Chedis, who occupied modern Rajputana and Bundelkhand, and the Kirātas or the people of Magadha in the east. Thus Rajputana and Magadha came within the ambit of Vedic civilization. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (about 900 B.C.) mentions the Aryans expanding to the east of the Sarasvatī and spreading beyond the Sadānīrā or the Great Gaṇḍaka under Māthava, the Videgha, who carried Agni Vaiśvānara in his mouth. Agni is fire used for reclamation of virgin forests. The land east of the Sadānīrā was called Videgha or Videha (North Bihar). Thus Videha was colonised and Aryanised. Beyond this region the territory was semi-Aryan or non-Aryan. Outside the zone of Ṛg-Vedic culture lived the Āndhras, Puṇḍras, Śabaras, Pulindas and Mutibas, tribes mentioned in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. Except the Puṇḍras, inhabitants of Eastern India, all these were inhabitants of the Deccan. We first come across a reference to the Vindhya mountains in the Kausitaki Upaniṣad (II, 8), the Narmadā having been reached by the Ṛg-Vedic Aryans, while the Upaniṣads mention Bhārgava as the sage of Kuṇḍina, the capital of Vidarbha. Centuries passed before the Ṛg-Vedic culture could establish itself successfully in the outlying zones to the east and the south. For the Baudhāyana-dharmasūtra (about 400 B.C.) distinctly mentions that persons who visit the countries of the Puṇḍras, Vaṅgas, Kaliṅgas or Pranūnas shall have to undertake purificatory rites. Yet it was in Magadha and Puṇḍra that Buddhism and Jainism found a most favourable soil and were taught in a dialect derived from Vedic Sanskrit. Magadha, Kāśī, Kośala and Videha were the home of the Prāchyas, mentioned in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and identified with the Prassi of the Greek writers. The Vaṅgas do not find a mention in the Brāhmaṇas.

The Permanent Gifts of the Vedic Culture: Kula, Grama and Sabha

The Vedic civilization gave to India the sense of integrity and sacredness of the patriarchal family (gṛha or kula) reared

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on a decisively monogamic foundation, the notions of kula and gotra and endogamous and forbidden relationships, as well as the conceptions of varṇa and āśrama that have woven the social structure of India. The Indo-Aryan joint family (kula) with its head (kulapa), not despotic like the Roman pater familias but the offerer of the various sacraments (yajña), the leader of the family council and the executor of its laws, is the distinctive mark of Indian civilization. The laws of the kula have to be respected by the king. The kula comprises persons belonging to several generations living together in the same homestead (gṛha) and tending the fire of the same hearth (agniśālā). Several kulas constitute the gotra, traced to a common ancestor after whom it is designated. Varṇa in Vedic India designates the elite (varaṇyam) implying that culture and spiritual attribute or essence (rūpa-viśeṣam) went into the roots of the Indian social order rather than race or colour. The Ṛg-Veda says: "He destroyed the Dasyus and protected the Ārya varṇa." The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa observes: "The Brāhmaṇa-varṇa is sprung from the Gods (Devas), the Śūdra from the Titans (Asuras)." The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa defines the scope of marriage relationship with relations of the third or the fourth degree. The Brahman and the Kshatriya could intermarry with the lower orders, including the Śūdra. In one of the Ṛg-Vedic hymns, we find the author observing: "I am a composer of hymns, my father is a physician, my mother grinds corn on a stone. We are all engaged in different occupations." The Śūdra class constantly obtained recruits by the entry of new aboriginal tribes mentioned variously as the Dāsas, Dasyus, Asuras, Nishādas and Piśāchas, but even these had the right to participate in the Vedic sacrifices and study the Vedas along with the four Varṇas, the Brāhmaṇas, the Kshatriyas, the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras. The Pañchajanāḥ or five people of the Vedic literature refer, according to the Nirukta (III, 8), to the four Varṇas and the Nishādas. The Taittirīya Saṁhitā definitely mentions the four Varṇas in order: "Put light in our Brāhmaṇas, put it in our Kings, put light in our Vaiśyas and Śūdras." "He created the Brāhmaṇa with Gāyatrī, the Rājanya with Triṣtubha and the Vaiśya with Jagatī; but he did not create the Śūdra with any metre." (V, 7, 6, 3-4). Similarly the gods are classified into the hierarchy of the Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras. The Varṇas, viz., the Brāhmaṇas, the Kshatriyas

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or Rājanyas, the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras were no doubt separate groups, but these had not as yet crystallised themselves into castes, the Vedic priests, warriors and kings easily exchanging their occupations, roles and statuses; while such ethnic groups like the Nishādas or Dasyus, outside the pale of the Vedic society, were gradually assimilated into it as the Śūdras. In Pāṇinī, the Chāṇḍālas and Mritapas (the same as Pukkusas) seem to be included in the category of the Śūdras. "The Śūdra is toil", says the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. The symbol of the Śūdra Varṇa in Ṛg-Vedic religion is Pūshan, Earth, which, as the Bṛhadāraṇyaka puts it, "nourishes everything that is". The universe did not flourish under the regime of the great Ṛg-Vedic gods, such as Indra, Varuṇa, Rudra and Brahmā, until Pūshan emerged from the mother-earth and created and stabilised wealth and prosperity by toil and tillage.

The five people (Pañchajanāḥ) including the four Varṇas and the non-Aryan Nishāda group, according to Sāyana, were thus the inheritors of Ṛg-Vedic culture. The commonalty represented by the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras lived in the villages (grāmas) under the grāmanis who looked after civil and military affairs. The Vedic Aryan village set the pattern of the construction of the Indian village towns and cities through the ages. It was itself patterned on the cattle pen, and comprised a walled or fenced regular enclosure with long streets that crossed at right angles. At the intersection there was a public square where the shrine was constructed and the village council (sabhā) met. Lands were parcelled out to heads of families (kulapas) and cultivated in separate holdings (kshetras) carefully measured off. The holdings radiated in narrow strips from the village settlement and were held as family property. Strips of common land (khilyas) intervened between the family fields; while there were also common grazing grounds (goshtha) reserved for the cattle and sheep of the entire village. Irrigation from wells whence water was lifted by stone-pulleys and led through broad channels (sūrmī sushirā) was also developed. As many as ten cereals are mentioned in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, and teams of six, eight or even twelve oxen for ploughing in the Ṛg-Veda. The sabhā of village elders had charge of economic management, defence, administration of justice, and all public matters. Village self-government has been a most important gift of the Vedic

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civilization which described the assemblies, such as the sabhās and the samitis, as the twin daughters of god Prajāpati—the most ancient and ubiquitous agencies of Aryan democratic rule. A remarkable hymn of the Ṛg-Veda is addressed to the deity called Samjana, or consensus, who is implored for the purposes of aggregation, co-operation and unity of minds and efforts. The Taittirīya definitely mentions the village judge (grāmya-vādin) and the maitrayāṇī, his sabhā or court, which was the custodian of the rights of the collective—the grāma, the vis and the jana. Arable lands (urvarā or kshetra) were owned by individuals of families (kulas), while the pasture lands were held in common (gavyam grāmaḥ, the clan seeking cattle). Irrigation channels (sūrmī sushirā) were also perhaps managed collectively. The village community was a most ancient and original institution of Indo-Aryan polity. From the grāma sabhā proclaiming (nādi) and shining with (tviṣi) justice to the bigger samiti of the class (vis) and the people (jana), which chooses the king, supports him in battle and dethrones him for tyranny, is a natural, democratic evolution. Vedic, like later, kingship in India is subdued by the voice of the people. The larger political formations met with in the Vedic age are the Rāshṭra and Vraja—kingdom and state.

The Heritage of Vedic Symbolism—Yajna and Atma-Vidya

But the living and undying contributions of Vedic culture to Indian ideology and values are its metaphysics and symbolism. The Brāhmaṇa literature clarifies and elaborates the Vedic rituals and ceremonies, including those connected with royalty, for the instruction of the priestly class. It is also concerned with myths and legends. The hymns came later than the rituals and are found in the Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads. Under the impetus of discussions in an assembly of Rishis in the Naimisha forest or the influence of a great leader-king of the type of Aśoka and Kaniṣka of later ages, hymns, liturgies and poems, composed originally for single ceremonies and clans, were consolidated and co-ordinated and myth and symbol came to assume greater importance than rite and ceremony. "Most private" discussions among teachers, pupils, laymen and women gradually led to the evolution of the special myth and philosophy of the Upaniṣads. The Vedic myth of the creation of man, society and the four

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functional groups in the spiritual hierarchy presents practically the values and ideals of life with compelling authority and universality. The Cosmic Person or Virāṭa Puruṣa, who was One in the beginning, multiplies Himself into His many children by supreme Sacrifice. As He creates mankind, He also creates the organic hierarchy of groups with their appropriate vocations, roles and duties. The latter are also called Sacrifices to be undertaken in this world as expiation by mortals. Through Sacrifice man, society and groups are created, and through Sacrifice again the mortals not only safeguard the fulfilment of their life goals but also assemble together the dismembered God and his multiplicity; for in essence God is One.

In the famous Puruṣa Sūkta of the Ṛg-Veda we find three dominant metaphysical notions. First, the universe is created from and by the Universal Man (Puruṣa) who yet transcends it. Second, creation is not only the result of the supreme Sacrifice of the Lord of Creatures (Prajāpati) but is also maintained only by His recurrent Sacrifice recapitulated by mortals. Man by re-enacting the Divine Sacrifice in the form of worship or yajña, which embraces an infinite code of duties and obligations, can be emancipated and become immortal and at the same time can keep the universe on-going. "One who eats for himself eats sins only," says one of the Vedic hymns. Third, in all worship and yajña various deities such as Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra, Agni, Yama, Vāyu or Āditya may be invoked, but it is the One Supreme God who is really invoked. The Ṛg-Veda interprets yajña in a comprehensive sense adapted to different stages or degrees of spiritual development achieved by man. For the highest yajña is by means of meditation, asceticism, pursuit of knowledge, self-control and detachment. For the ordinary man yajña is symbolic and "vicarious" offering to the Puruṣa, and the building of the fire-altar (agniśālā) is the reconstruction of the universe in the form of the Puruṣa. Man, as he builds up the sacrificial altar with his elaborate and minute rituals and procedures, builds up his new, invisible, boneless and immortal body. The altar symbolises Prajāpati, Puruṣa, or the Cosmic Spirit. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa observes: "Thereby (i.e. by the building of an altar), the Prajāpati became immortal, and in like manner does the sacrifice become immortal by making that body (of the altar) immortal." Thus he conquers death and the fear of death. By

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the yajña man obtains a new birth, becomes 'twice-born' in a divine society. A few lines from the famous Puruṣa Sūkta are given below:

A thousand heads hath Puruṣa, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet,
On every side pervading earth he fills a space ten fingers wide.
This Puruṣa is all that yet hath been and all that is to be,
The lord of immortality which waxes greater still by food.
When gods prepared the sacrifice with Puruṣa as their offering,
Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn; summer was the wood.
The Brāhmaṇa was his mouth, of both his arms was Rājanya made.
His thighs became the Vaiśyas, from his feet the Śūdra was produced.
The moon was gendered from his mind, and from his eyes the sun had birth.
Indra and Agni from his mouth were born, and Vāyu from his breath,
Forth from his navel came mid-air; the sky was fashioned from his head,
Earth from his feet, and from his ear the regions,
Thus they formed the worlds.

The Ṛg-Vedic hymn of Man has given India the theory and art of self-sacrifice as constituting the true worship of the Divine, the mimesis in each mortal creature of the Sacrifice of the Virāṭa Puruṣa in order that he may gain immortality. The entire range of human responses to the Deity from meditation, self-control and pursuit of higher knowledge to the offering of the goods of enjoyment to the senses was symbolised as sacrificial oblations to Fire, signifying the mystery of the primordial sacrifice of the Deity during creation. "Life itself is the great sacrifice where the Absolute (Brahman) is at once the sacrificer, the Fire where the sacrifice is offered, the material of the sacrifice, the Supreme Reality to whom sacrifice is offered, whom one attains by living his life as if it is Brahma-karma or an offering of all its fruits to Brahman in complete detachment."

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The Yajur-Veda as well as the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa hold that man is born with three debts, debts to the ancestors, to the spiritual teachers and the gods, and that these he can discharge only by fatherhood, study and yajña. Man is enjoined in India to perform five Sacrifices or obligations for the maintenance and continuity of the cosmic and cultural symbiosis through the transmission of his triple heritage: first of the biological heritage by parenthood; second, of the spiritual heritage by the cultivation and advancement of learning; and, third, of the cosmic symbiotic heritage by love, care and devotion to the welfare of fellow-men and sentient creatures. The focus of all these sacrifices is the family altar (agniśālā) where burns the perennial sacred fire, the building of the altar being undertaken with meticulous propriety, symbolising the structure of the unity of the cosmos, the fire (Agni) being identified with the progenitor (Prajāpati) and man being identified with both Prajāpati and Agni. Prajāpati is also Death. Thus does man, "endowed with a luminous ethereal nature," by his Sacrifices become immortal. Ethically potent also is the Vedic conception of Ṛta and Satya, truth of thought and speech and moral norm or order and harmony in the cosmic, moral and religious sphere that binds gods, men and other creatures of the earth to the totality of Life through sacrifice and service. The eternal Law of Right and Reason (Ṛta) and the immutable Law of Karma, which are the directive and sustaining principles of the higher and the lower realms and which have played such important roles in Indian moral theory and practice, have their genesis in the Ṛg-Veda. The Vedic conceptions of Ṛta, Satya and Dhāta merged in the conception of Dharma which endures in the midst of change and is free from the incidents of ceremonial form, Karma or Vrata. Man seeks and achieves happiness and prosperity (preyas) through Karma (Sacrifices) and Dharma, and the everlasting goodness and immortality (śreyas) through knowledge (jñāna). The paths of preyas and śreyas intermingle as there is a unity of the inner and outer life.

Finally, the Vedic culture has also given to India the doctrine of metempsychosis or transmigration according to which true knowledge (vidyā) leads to the "Path of the Gods" or immortality, while worldliness leads to the "Path of the Fathers" associated with a cycle of births and deaths depending on Karma.

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The doctrines of Sacrifice, Karma, transmigration, and deliverance from saṁsāra as well as ascetic discipline and chastity have furnished the firm foundations of Indian ethics; while the conception of the Absolute (Brahman) and of the identity of the Self and the Absolute (as in the famous formula "Tat Tvam Asi") has remained the central abiding notion in Indian metaphysics through the centuries. In the field of Indian art, the Vedic culture has provided the fundamental motifs and symbols such as the swastika, the lotus, the conch, the umbrella, the chakra, the sun, the nāga-garuḍa, the wish-fulfilling tree and the full vase that have been reproduced through successive ages. Such myths of Vedic origin as the combat between the Devas and Asuras, the incomprehensibility of Māyā or Creative Energy, the Supreme God asleep in the Cosmic Waters or the Great Serpent of the Universe have also supplied dominant symbols in Indian religion and art, defining and clarifying the cosmic process applicable to life, mind and the universe. The culture of the Sarasvatī or Bhāratī is inseparable from the verities and values of Indian civilization.

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CHAPTER VI

INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL REVOLUTIONS— BHĀGAVATISM, ĀJĪVIKISM AND JAINISM

The Upanisadic Protest against Ceremonialism and Priesthood

The seeds of religious protest and social revolution, ripening into broad, theistic or devotional and egalitarian movements, were sown as early as Vedic sacrifices, gifts, penances and fastings were entrenching themselves. This was inevitable as the rituals became exceedingly elaborate. Sometimes as many as about twenty major and minor priests presided, supervised and assisted in these ceremonies that became also very cruel and bloody, involving the slaughter of beasts, including young animals, on a stupendous scale. Several of the Upaniṣads vigorously emphasise the highest knowledge of the Ātman (parā-vidyā). The Muṇḍaka characterises persons who are devoted to sacrifices to gods and mere ceremonialism as foolish and deluded. "Unsafe boats are these sacrificial forms. Thinking sacrifice and merit is the chiefest thing, naught better do they know—deluded." The Chhāndogya states that the true equivalent of what is commonly called sacrifice (yajña) or the sacrificial victim (iṣṭa) or a protracted sacrifice (sattrāyaṇa) is really the chaste life of the Brahmachārī. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka enjoins that instead of a horse-sacrifice the universe should be conceived as a horse and meditated upon as such. The emphasis in the Upaniṣads came to be directed towards penance (tapas), reverence (śraddhā), truth (satya), chastity (Brahmacharya) and injunction (vidhi). The Aitareya Āraṇyaka asks: "To what end shall we repeat the Veda, to what end shall we sacrifice? For we sacrifice breath in speech or in breath speech." Thus the Upaniṣadic doctrine of identity of Self and the Absolute or Brahman, by which the seer knows himself as the All, was no mere metaphysical speculation but was actually a liberating, protestant gospel against ceremonial sacrifice.

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The Shift of Leadership from the West to the East, from the Brahmans to the Kshatriyas

It is noteworthy that the protestant metaphysics was developed largely in the half-Brahmanised eastern territories of Magadha and Videha, while the home of orthodoxy was the Kuru-Pāñchāla country in the west. Intellectual ascendancy shifted from the west to the east, from the Brāhmaṇas of Kuru-Pāñchāla to the learned Kshatriya princes and seers of Magadha and Videha. One of the most prominent seats of later Vedic culture was the court of King Janaka of Videha, where it was that the famous seer Yājñavalkya defeated in philosophic disputations the various schools of western orthodoxy, gave a profound symbolic interpretation to sacrifices and rituals as against bloody animal offerings favoured in the west, and promulgated the new doctrine of Self and Brahman-knowledge, redefining yoga as the bringing together of the Universal and Individual Selves. Among the galaxy of Vedic seers and teachers, the lustre of Yājñavalkya's wisdom, versatility and practical common sense has remained undimmed through the ages. It is particularly from him that India has obtained the best clarification of the doctrines of the Universal Self, who is within all (Ātma-vidyā) and who is the subject of immediate perception or darśana, and of the Brahman as Pure Intelligence and Bliss manifesting itself in all phenomenal existences (Madhu-vidyā). Yājñavalkya's denial of deities and of ceremonialism and his uncompromising idealistic monism represent the acme and culmination of Vedic teaching.

Gradually, spiritual leadership passed from the hands of priests and sacrificers to the lay and Kshatriya section of the community and to munis, ascetics and wanderers of the forests (śramaṇas, charakas and parivrājakas). Among the great Kshatriya princes, to whom noted Brāhmaṇa scholars and theologians went for instruction, were Ajātaśatru of Kāśī, Aśvapati Kaikeya (who taught the Brāhmaṇas the mystery of the Universal or Vaiśvānara Self), Pravāhaṇa Jaivali (who was famed for his knowledge of the mystery of the syllable Om) and King Janaka of Videha, whose court became practically the centre of Aryan wisdom and culture in later Vedic times.

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The Pre-eminence of Krishna—Vasudeva, the Founder of Bhagavatism

The most distinguished Kshatriya seer was, however, Krishna, Devakī-putra, the disciple of Ghora Āngirasa, a priest of the Sun and worshipper of the Fire-god (Agni), who taught Krishna "so that he never thirsted again". It is probable that Krishna inherited the Dravidian religious tradition through his teacher Ghora Āngirasa, since Āngirasa Veda is connected in the Vedic literature with Ghora, i.e. some dark practice derived from the autochthones of the land. The Mahābhārata also mentions Krishna as having descended from Āngirasa and as a ritvij, adept in the Vedāṅga, and the scripture of Āngirasa as the noblest Śruti (VIII, 69, 85). From his master Krishna learnt a unique view of sacrificial offerings as well as of the nature of the Self as the Absolute. According to the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad, Ghora Āngirasa taught Krishna that the righteous conduct—the practice of the virtues of austerity, charity, uprightness, non-violence and truthfulness—was as efficacious as fees given to a sacrificing priest. The Upaniṣad observes: "When Ghora Āngirasa explained this to Krishna, the son of Devakī, he also mentioned that in the final hour one should take refuge in three thoughts: 'Thou art the eternal (akśata), thou art the immovable (achyuta), thou art the very essence of life (prāṇa).'" Krishna's teaching in the Bhagavad Gītā (VIII, 9, 10) is similar, viz., that at the time of death one should meditate on "the Seer, the Ancient, the Ruler; Subtler than the Subtle, the Supporter of all, whose form is beyond conception, who is the One self-effulgent like the sun beyond darkness". Like his great preceptor, the sage Ghora Āngirasa who is called Krishna Āngirasa in the Kaushītakī Brāhmaṇa (xxx, 6), and is probably a composer of some hymns in the Ṛg-Veda, Krishna challenged Vedic ritualism and stressed the significance of the moral life, the cultivation of austerity, charity, non-injury and uprightness. The Dīgha-Nikāya, the Ambaṭṭha-Sutta, mentions Rishi-Krishna (Kanha). This is of great significance in Indian religious history since the particular section of the Dīgha-Nikāya considers the views of prominent non-Buddhist teachers and founders of sects. Vāsudeva seems to have been an accepted form of the Vedic god Vishṇu at the close of the Vedic period. According to the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, Nārāyaṇa,

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Vāsudeva and Vishṇu are three aspects of the same god. In the Mahābhārata we find the story that Pauṇḍraka pretended to be Purushottama or Vishṇu and was known under the name of Vāsudeva. He came in conflict with and ultimate destruction at the hands of Krishna. It was the Sātvatas, an important branch of the Yādava race, who first recognised Krishna not merely as their tribal hero and leader (Sātvatām-varaḥ) but as the Supreme God, or the Sun whom he taught them to meditate upon. Vāsudeva-Krishna's identification with the Sun is clearly indicated in the Mahābhārata. Nārāyaṇa observes: "Being like the Sun, I cover the whole world with my rays, and I am also the sustainer of all beings and am hence called Vāsudeva." (XII, 341, 41) This is repeated in the Gītā (XIII, 18) and is an echo of the Upaniṣads where Krishna is taught to worship the Sun as the Supreme Light shining above all darkness. Thus Krishna came to be known as Vāsudeva-Krishna and his worshippers were called Pañcharātras or Bhāgavatas. The Epic observes: "The Pañcharātra is represented as an independent religion professed by the Sātvatas, and is also called the Sātvata religion; and Vasu Uparichara, who was a follower of that religion, is spoken of as worshipping the Supreme God according to the Sātvata manner which was revealed in the beginning by the Sun." Similarly the later Bhāgavata Purāṇa also indicates that Bhāgavatism represents the Sātvata rite in worshipping Vāsudeva: "The Sātvatas worship Brahman as Bhagavān and as Vāsudeva." A Kshatriya scholar and seer, Krishna thus was a historical personage who flourished about 1000 B.C., if we accept the Jain tradition of Krishna having preceded Pārśvanātha (817 B.C.), and who taught the Sātvatas the worship of the Sun and became later deified as Krishna-Vāsudeva, the radiant Lord of the Sky. As early as about 500 B.C. Pāṇini speaks of Vāsudevaka as a person who worships Vāsudeva—a general appellation of the Supreme Lord which was acquired by Krishna, the son of Vasudeva of the race of Vṛṣṇīs. "Of the Vṛṣṇīs I am Vāsudeva", says Krishna in the Bhagavad Gītā. Krishna worship is thus pretty old. The Mahābhārata also mentions Krishna as having undertaken long courses of penance in the Himalayas, abolished human sacrifice in Magadha and avenged insults to womanhood in the Kuru country. Krishna's opposition to the current Vedic religion is clearly indicated by certain passages that refer to Indra's defeat

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and humiliation at his hands. He came to be known among the Sātvatas as Vāsudeva and as Bhagavān; while his more familiar appellations include Hari, Keśava, Govinda and Janārdana. In Patañjali (150 B.C.) we find Vāsudeva mentioned as Bhāgavat, the term used by himself for the object of his worship, meaning 'the Adorable'. Vāsudeva is no mere Kshatriya but the word is the name of God in Patañjali who also refers to the Vṛṣṇī tribe, to Baladeva, Satyabhāmā and Akrūra, and to the legend of Vāsudeva's killing of Kaṁsa being displayed in painted shows. Thus the main myth of Krishna religion, which we find elaborated later on in the Mahābhārata and Harivaṁśa, was quite popular by the second century B.C. Krishna-Vāsudeva's cult was called the Bhāgavata religion that according to the Mahābhārata has been traditionally handed down by Vivasvān to Manu and by Manu to Ikṣvāku. Vivasvān, Manu and Ikṣvāku are obviously Kshatriya philosopher-rulers of the ancient days, and these very names occur in the list of the spiritual preceptors of the Bhāgavatas or Pañcharātrikas. Vaiśampāyana, in the Śānti Parva of the Mahābhārata, mentions that "the duties of the ascetic class are told as well". The path of world flight, though discussed in the Gītā, does not correspond to the traditional teachings as handed down from Vivasvān, for the Gītā certainly prefers action. The "ancient wisdom" (yogaḥ purātana of the Gītā), the Bhāgavata religion, was also called Nārāyaṇīya Sātvata and Aikāntika (monotheistic), and India's most widely read scripture obtained the name of Bḥagavad Gītā because it was taught to Arjuna by the Supreme Lord (Bhagavān) on the battle-field of Kurukshetra. The Gītā is also called in the Mahābhārata as Harigītā. The symbolic interpretation of sacrifices and the immanence of the Supreme Eternal Self in Life and Action, which we meet in Krishna's teacher Ghora Āngirasa, forestall the teaching of the Bḥagavad Gītā; while the Nārāyaṇīya or Sātvata religion, promulgated by Vāsudeva's double, Rishi Nara-Nārāyaṇa, and described in the Nārāyaṇīya chapter of the Mahābhārata, is essentially the same as Krishna-Bhāgavatism. Elsewhere we find Nārāyaṇa identified with Kṛishna and Arjuna with Nara.

Krishna-Bhāgavatism was essentially moral and mystical, and focussed a protest not only against ceremonialism and priesthood but also against religious rationalism. It reconciled the worship of the Deity with the transcendence of the Absolute,

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the Brahman or the Self as expounded in the Upaniṣads. The Mahābhārata repeatedly refers with respect to the Pañcharātra or Bhakti literature which deals with the worship of Krishna-Vishṇu as Nārāyaṇa and Puruṣa. Such worship must have become popular among the lay populations of the large states rather than among the Brāhmaṇa schools. The worship of the personal deity Krishna-Vishṇu-Puruṣa derived its invaluable support from the early Vedic conception of the deity, Vishṇu or Puruṣa. The later Upaniṣads from about 250 B.C. onwards preached the doctrine of Īśvara or Lord and of revelation vouchsafed to whomsoever the Lord chooses. The new theistic doctrine was preached by the Bhāgavatas or Vāsudevakas, named after Vāsudeva, who is Krishna himself and is later identified in an Āraṇyaka with Vishṇu and Nārāyaṇa and in the famous Besnagar inscription of the convert Heliodorus (the Greek envoy of King Antialkidas of Taxila) with the Supreme God, Devadeva Vishṇu. This was in the 2nd century B.C., when the cult of Vāsudeva and Saṁkarshaṇa (later considered as Krishna's brother) was mentioned as prevalent, especially in Central India and the Deccan.

The Social Turmoil and Rise of Asceticism in the East

Beyond the Madhyadeśa in the eastern Indo-Gangetic plain there was much social turmoil due to a series of wars between the numerous small republican states and kingdoms. The growth of the Magadha kingdom, with its capital first at Girivraja and then at Pāṭalīputra, was the result of much struggle, conquest and devastation. Bimbisāra extended the kingdom of Magadha by his conquest of Aṅga and his son Ajātaśatru waged successful wars against Kośala and Vaiśālī. The kingdom of Kośala completely disappeared from history a little later, absorbed by the new Empire of Magadha, while the great republican tribe of the Lichchhavis of North Bihar, with its capital at Vaiśālī, was forced into an alliance with Magadha. Mahāvīra and Buddha, Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru of Magadha, Udayana of Kauśāmbī, and Prasenajit of Kośala were either contemporaries or near contemporaries. In his own life-time Buddha saw the strenuous effort of Virūpāksha, the king of Kośala, to exterminate the Śākyas, and soon after his death the city of Kapilavastu was sacked and the entire tribe wiped out. The eclipse of the

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small republican states by the rising monarchies that were built on a large scale, represented a social transition with its harsh features of misfortune and disintegration which stimulated large-scale movements towards asceticism and penance. Asceticism is as old as Vedic religion. We have a reference to ascetics (munis), friends of Indra and of the gods generally, who are naked (vātavasanā) and show brownish dirt on their bodies, in the Ṛg-Veda (X, 136, 2), and to the practice of begging by those Brāhmaṇas who have renounced the world in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (III, 5, 11). Sanyāsa and Pravajya are associated with the search for the Supreme Spirit in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Muṇḍaka Upaniṣads. But the 6th century which was an era of turmoil and misery greatly stimulated asceticism and renunciation. The attitude of social despair and pessimism is expressed by the Jaina canon Uttarādhyana: "Happy we are, happy live we who call nothing our own; when Mithilā is on fire, nothing is burnt that belongs to me." The ascetic orders and brotherhoods multiplied and, wandering through the country, ranged themselves in strong opposition to the elaborate Brahmanical ceremonials and leaned towards new systems of philosophies. The Arthaśāstra refers to the Śākyas and Ājīvikas as heretical sects and bans their entertainment. Many sects such as the Achelakas, the Jatilakas, the Ājīvikas or Śūdra-sanyāsis under Maskarī Gośālā, the Jains or Nirgranthas under Pārśvanātha and the orders (Jithakaras) of Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakaṁbali, Pakuddha Kachchāyana and Sañjaya Belatthiputta arose, comprising individuals who prematurely renounced the world and practised penances (tapas) or cruel self-mortification.

Both Mahāvīra, son of a Lichchhavi noble, and Buddha, son of a noble Śākya, belonged to a Tibeto-Mongolian stock of the Himalayan frontier and were regarded as degraded Kshatriyas by the Brāhmaṇas, and had natural hostility against the claims of the Brāhmaṇas to the monopoly of wisdom. Such hostility was both racial and philosophical. Especially repugnant to them were the cumbrous and irksome ritual sacrifices marked by cruelty, mechanical routine and pomp that totally obscured the goal of personal salvation. Many indeed were the ascetic schools and sects that sprang up in the 6th century B.C., but disappeared in course of time. Out of these only Jainism and Buddhism have now survived.

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Resemblances and Differences between Jainism, Ajivikism and Buddhism

Both Jainism and Buddhism began as reform movements in the eastern part of the Ganges valley, where the majority of the population did not come under the influence of Brahmanical culture, and where Brahmanical teaching was corrupt and polytheism was thriving. The popular religion of the time was characterised by the Buddha as Deva-dharma, or worship of numerous devas or devatās according to the predilections of individuals. Undoubtedly no worship of images was in vogue among the Brāhmaṇa schools but the general population gradually took to image worship. Pāṇini (about 500 B.C.) refers to the images of Śiva and Skandha and possibly of Vāsudeva; while in Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra we find mention of the temples of Aparājitā, Apratihata, Jayanta, Vaijayanta, Śiva, Aśvins, Vāiśravaṇa, Lakshmī and Madirā (?). The Mauryas, according to Patañjali, established or manufactured images of gods (Śivakas) for worship in their greed for gold. Among the gods of worship, mentioned in the Buddhistic canon, the Niddesa (4th century B.C.), are Vāsudeva, Baladeva, Punnabhadda, Maṇibhadda, Aggi, Nāga, Suparṇa, Yakkha, Asura, Gandharva, Mahārāja, Chanda, Sūrya, Indra, Brahmā, Deva and Diśā. Both Mahāvīra and Buddha not only opposed image-worship but also re-interpreted the prevailing Upaniṣadic doctrines of the Brahman and the immanence of the Universal Self. They were equally dissatisfied with the doctrine that Perfection and Fullness belong to man, sense-bound, wayward and limited as he is. Both stressed a more strenuous search for the self. Mahāvīra (the Great Hero) or Jina (the Victor)—the name which Vardhamāna later adopted—was the head of the sect called the Nirgranthas (free from fetters). The Buddhists called him Niganṭha Nātaputta (Nirgrantha Jñātriputraḥ). He saw man as Becoming and taught ways of Becoming, as the Buddha taught the four Noble Truths and the Noble Eight-fold Path. Unlike the Buddha, he did not wish man to renounce the world but to see him evolving, rising to perfection or complete release from bondage and physical existence (nirvāṇa or moksha) through the cultivation of strong will (mānas) and effort by concentration on penance (tapas). It is severe austerity that disciplines the will in effort so that man

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becomes what he can become—the Kevalin who soars above the mundane world to āloka whence there is no return. Man is here neither absorbed into a Supreme Being as in Brahmanism, nor withdraws to nothingness as in Buddhism, but achieves a state of existence without relations, emotions and attributes. For ever freed from the burden of Karma, he shines in his righteousness, omniscience and perfection on the top of the universe. As he emancipates himself from thick, dead matter and achieves boundless insight, power and bliss, he exists as an independent, delivered soul among many others in the land called Siddhaśilā, whence he never comes back to this world. There he is resplendent for ages that never were begun and that never will close. "Omniscience, boundless vision, illimitable righteousness, infinite strength, perfect bliss, indestructibility, existence without form, a body that is neither light nor heavy, such are his characteristics." Man in Jainism is the Supreme and the Perfect, the Conqueror (Jina), the Venerable (Arhat) and the Evangelist Founder of the Four Orders (Tīrthaṁkara).

Mahāvīra had many lay disciples from Vaiśālī and other neighbouring places who accepted the gospel of Becoming in their daily routine of life and business through ministration of the sick, care for animals and insects, almsgiving, hospitality and non-violence in every respect. The Buddha disapproved of austerity and prescribed the Middle Path, but the prophet of the Niganṭhas believed in it as the mode of regulating mānas or effort for the goal of Becoming, of moulding the body-mind as the vehicle of Perfection. Austerity, according to Mahāvīra, annihilates karma, shuts out the influx of bad karma. Jainism believes in the Kriyāvāda, i.e. the doctrine that the soul acts or is affected by acts (karma). Brahmanism holds the same view but also insists that the karma acts through the instrumentality of the Divine; in Jainism the operation is automatic through the properties (pudgala) of matter. Buddhism adheres to the opposite doctrine of Akriyāvāda, teaching that a soul does not exist, or that it does not act or is unaffected by acts. With the Akriyāvāda are associated the Buddhist disapproval of self-mortification and commendation of righteous action by deed, by word and by thought. By austerity and meditation, according to Jainism, the soul, which is itself saṁsāra, becomes purified. In the Yoga of Jainism the control of the passions

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and the achievement of universal friendship (maitrī), freedom from antipathy (pramoda), universal compassion (karuṇā) and indifference to human wickedness (madhyastha) go together. Meditation (dhyāna) and equableness (samatva) are equated. Thus the Jain discipline is somewhat different from the Hindu Pātañjala Yoga and even from Buddhist Jhana and Yoga. The Buddha used to meet Brahman Parivrājakas during his tours wherever he found an opportunity. His own meditative life was considerably helped, according to the Majjhima-Nikāya, by two Brahman monks who initiated him in the stages in "immeasurable" contemplation. But he shunned Mahāvīra and the Niganṭhas, who were in the habit of abusing him and his doctrines. One of his chief disciples Moggallāna was murdered by the Niganṭhas, causing great grief to the Tathāgata and the Order.

Of Mahāvīra's numerous disciples, two were favourites, Gautama, a Brahman, and Maskarī or Makkhali, also called Gośāla or Gosāla (the cow-stall), because he was born of a slave confined to a cow-pen by his master. The latter lived with his teacher for six years practising penances. Then they quarrelled, and Maskarī became the founder of the Ājīvika sect, the members of which did not seek their means of livelihood (ājīva) and went about naked. Maskarī denies both karma and its consequences, though he admits human frailty and depravity. He holds that karma can be worked out by transmigration and not by one's free effort. "There is no power, no energy, no human strength or heroic endeavours (prakkama)." The repudiation of purushakāra is associated with a special doctrine of re-birth and re-animation. The Ājīvikas are mentioned in the rock-hewn cave on Barabar Hills at Gaya and in the seventh pillar edict of Aśoka in the 3rd century B.C. The rock-caves on the Barabar and Nāgārjuni hills were obviously excavated by Aśoka and Daśaratha for the ascetics of the Ājīvika sect. With them is associated the beginning, in the 3rd century B.C., of Indian rock-cut architecture for the use of recluses in the forests. This blossomed forth in the later centuries into a most distinctive and splendid architectural mode, with its worshipful Buddhas, Śivas and Tīrthaṁkaras and kneeling elephants and lions, scattered throughout the land from Bhājā in the west to Khandagiri in the east and from Pattaṅ Munara in the north to

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Rameśvaram in the south. Varāhamihira refers to the Ājīvika recluses in the 6th century A. D., while in the 9th century A.D. they are referred to along with the Trairāśikas and Digaṁbaras by Śilāṅka. In the middle of the 13th century, we also come across a reference to the Ājīvikas in an inscription of the reign of the Chola king Rājarāja, who imposed certain taxes on them. Thus the sect founded at the time of the Buddha maintained its existence and spread throughout India until at least the 13th century.

Mahāvīra, Maskarī Gośāla and Buddha were all contemporaries. Mahāvīra and Maskarī were, as we have seen, associates for six years of their spiritual life. The two other great religious leaders, Mahāvīra and Buddha, never met each other although their tours of ministry may have crossed. The Jains were called Niganṭhas and their leader Nātaputta by the early Buddhists. Mahāvīra was not the founder but was the last prophet (Tīrthaṁkara) and seer of Jainism. By his contemporaries he was regarded as the "Gaṇāchārya", "Tīrthaṁkara" and "Saṁghi", "Sādhusammata bahujanasya" (adored as a saint by the multitude). Senior to the Buddha in age, experience, and in the life of a monk (parivrājaka), he had his largest supporters from among the republican peoples, especially the Lichchhavis and the Mallas. King Cheṭaka of the Lichchhavis was his own uncle. The Emperors Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru of Magadha, the Gaṇarājas of Kāśī and Kośala and the kings of Sauvīra, Aṅga, Vatsa and Avantī were his devotees. It is of interest to record that along with kings and great merchant princes who became his followers, there was Saddalaputta, master of five hundred potter-shops, turning out clay goods, who was also an ardent disciple.

Prevalent Faiths in the Sixth Century B.C.

Not merely Krishna Bhāgavatism, but another theistic cult, rooted in the Mohenjo-Dāro worship and reinforced by the Vedic laudation of Rudra and by the Brāhmaṇa exaltation of Mahān-deva, that of Śiva, was also popular at the time of Mahāvīra and the Buddha, especially in the Madhyadeśa. Both obtained converts particularly from the lower social orders and the foreigners (mlechchhas). From the Mahābhārata, Śānti Parva (284, 121-124), we gather that the Pāśupatas were opposed to the

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rules of varṇa and āśrama. The Arthaśāstra refers to the Kāpālikas who lived outside the habitation. Śiva-Bhāgavatas, Māheśvaras or Pāśupatas were fairly numerous in the 6th century B.C. Śiva-Bhāgavatism finds an echo in one of the later Upaniṣads, the Śvetāśvetara, which describes Śiva as the Īśa or Supreme Lord of the Universe. The worship of the Vedic god Agni was also widely prevalent. The Brahmanical sect called the Jatilas were fire-worshippers; to these the Tathāgata preached at Uruvela his fire-discourse.

There were also popular theistic cults of trees and rivers. Yakshas or Yakshīs, Nāgas or Nāgīs, Gandharvas, Apsarās, tree-and-water spirits were worshipped by the common people along with Vāsudeva or Krishna, Śiva, Skandha, Vishākha, Umā and Vāsinī. Among the major deities worshipped in the temples of Mauryan cities mentioned by the Arthaśāstra were Durgā (Aparājitā), Lakshmī, Madirā, Vishṇu (Apratihāra), Indra (Vaijayanta), Śiva (Subrahmaṇya), Vāiśravaṇa and the Aśvins. Krishna is also mentioned as a popular god. The popularity of Yakṣha worship is abundantly illustrated by the large number of Yaksha and Yakshiṇī colossal statues found at Patna, Besnagar, Mathurā and Gwalior, and the Bharhut railing images. The Nikāyas are full of references to the worship of the Yakshas who are endowed with supernatural powers and can produce supernatural phenomena. Such are Śivaka, the guardian of Sītāvana, Indaka of Mount Indrakūṭa, Kumbhīra or Gambhīra of the Vipula mountain and Sakka or Sakra of Gridhrakūta hill. Such trees as the pipal and nyagrodha were also worshipped by the common people with chaityas or roofless structures built round them.

It is, however, remarkable that the popular upheaval against ceremonial religion, priesthood and the caste system was embodied in the form not of theistic cults, but of strict apsychism, and the practice of asceticism and a rigid moral code. Both Jainism and Buddhism originated, like many other reforming sects and schools, from mendicant ascetics, who like Krishna of the theistic Vāsudeva cult equally hailed from the Kshatriya clans and equally protested against the Brahman ascendancy and arrogance, stylised in the phrase 'gods on earth' (bhūsura). In the Nikāyas we find not only the recognition of superiority of the Kshatriyas, which was a social fact in the less Brahmanised

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eastern portion of the Ganges basin, but also an acknowledgement of the status and prestige of the merchants and traders (seṭṭhis)—the new urban bourgeoisie who formed the mainstay of Jainism and Buddhism. Many nobles and wealthy persons, who due to misfortune were reduced to slavery or were forced to hire service to the wealthy in the age of disorder and turmoil, also preferred the new gospel. The economic background of the rise and spread of Jainism and Buddhism is the opposition to the Brahmanical monopoly focussed in the Kshatriya and merchant groups and in the dāsas and bhatakas, the have-nots (dalidda kula, adhana) whose degradation is lamented so sympathetically in the Jātakas. Mere indoctrination with the Law of Karma could not appease the classes that were dispossessed and oppressed or that could not rise to the status and power they demanded. Jainism and Buddhism both lifted the ban of the order from the dāsas, who when discharged became eligible for monkhood on terms of equality with other castes, as well as from the lowest castes such as the Chāṇḍālas who could rise to arhatship. As between the heresies, while Jainism found its intellectual background in the non-theistic Sāṅkhya philosophy, Buddhism affiliated itself with non-theistic Sāṅkhya and Vedānta.

The Teaching of Mahavira

India has not paid her worthy tribute to Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, the follower of Pārśva, who flourished from 599 to 529 B.C., preceding the Buddha in his preaching, wandering and proselytisation. Such austerity as his has hardly been seen. He threw off his garments and went about completely naked, never staying in a village more than one night and in a town more than five. In winter when the cold wind blew, the Venerable One, strong in control, despised all shelter. He would not talk to men lest he should form any attachments. Asked, he gave no answer. Even the dogs ran at him, bit him. Few people kept off the attacking, biting dogs. The scoffers lit a fire between his feet when the Venerable One sat in meditation in a field, but he remained oblivious. Through his ascetic practices he conquered all desires, and finally reached Nirvāṇa — " the complete and full, the unobstructed, unimpeded, infinite and supreme, best knowledge and intuition called Kevala (lit., spiritual nature or omniscience, free from any sources

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of error)." After becoming the Jina (victor) and Kevalin (total), he travelled widely for thirty years teaching and organising, visiting all the great towns of Magadha and Aṅga, spending the rainy seasons when wandering was prohibited for monks at Vaiśālī, Champā, Mithilā, Śrāvastī and Rājagṛha. He also wandered in the pathless jungles of Western Bengal (Laddha, Vajjabhūmi, and Subbhabhūmi) but had his greatest influence in Kāśī, Kośala, Videha and Lichchhavi territory. Kings Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru of Magadha, King Hastipāla of the Mallas, Kings Kuniya and Cheṭaka and Prince Abhaya of the Lichchhavis, King Śatānīka of Kauśāmbī and King Chaṇḍa Pradyota of Avantī were his supporters. The veneration which he commanded is amply indicated by the illumination in honour of his demise by the eighteen Gaṇarājas of Kāśī and Kośala, nine Mallakis and nine Lichchhavis.

Jainism does not accept any Supreme Being, but treats the Absolute as comprising a plurality of souls. The aim of each individual soul is to become a conqueror (Jina) through the annihilation of karma by the five vows, not to injure life, not to lie, not to steal, to observe strict chastity, and, finally, to renounce all interest in worldly things, especially to keep no property. Non-injury or non-violence is interpreted in a comprehensive sense by Jainism, including not merely all thought, speech and action that provoke discord but also spiritual excesses and acts of self-abasement, so as to promote amity with all, souls being attributed to all sentient creatures and even to plants, air, water and minerals. The most precious gifts of Jainism to Indian civilization are the universal profound reverence for all forms of life and the way of austerity and penance, including the discarding of clothes, self-mortification and fast unto death, practised not merely by monks and nuns but also by the laity including the nobility and the royalty.

The Moral Grandeur of Jainism

No religion in the world has stressed more man's immaculate purity, chastity and conquest over the body, the senses and world-stuff (pudgala) than Jainism. The moral grandeur of the Jina and the bleak, metaphysical solitude of the Kevalin, indeed, represent some of the sublimest peaks of man's dignity and freedom ever envisaged by him. The Jina seeks neither the Supreme

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Bhagavān or Lord of the Universe, nor lesser gods, who answer prayers, nor the Ātman-Brahman nor the transcendental Being, such as the Brāhmaṇa seeks. He conquers his mind and passions (kaṣaya) through self-mortification, emancipates himself from dependence upon the world and all its objects, animate or inanimate, and transcends his own physical existence and karma-bondage (kevalin). "He is without body, without resurrection, without contact with matter; he is not feminine nor masculine, nor neuter; he perceives, he knows, but there is no analogy (whereby to describe the nature of the emancipated soul)." "Man," says Mahāvīra, "thou art thine own friend. Why wishest thou for a friend beyond thyself?" His utterance is similar to the Buddha's: "Self is the lord of self. Who else can be the lord?" The closing words of the Buddha were also an exhortation to his disciples "to be themselves, be their own lamps and own refuges". Jainism, Buddhism and Brahmanical asceticism are equally radical in their vows of renunciation of desires: in fact, of the five great vows (Mahāvrata) four are common. Jainism adds the monk's vow to forsake all possible interest in the mundane world and is much more vigorous and uncompromising in its ascetic denial. Viewing that women are "the greatest temptation in the world" and "the cause of all sinful acts", Jainism eschews altogether the least possible interest in sex. All love of the world, "all attachment whether to little or much, small or great, living or lifeless things are renounced". "Gods who retain women, weapons and rosaries are steeped in attachment and so stained", and "who are in the habit of giving and accepting favours" are regarded as false gods who ensnare men. Nakedness, self-torture and death by starvation are in Jainism the surest means of achievement of Nirvāṇa. The Jains, indeed, contemptuously spoke of the Buddhists as addicted to greed and luxury.

The Practical Genius of Mahavira

Corresponding to the eight-fold magga of Buddhism with its emphasis on Śīla or Right Conduct, Right Knowledge, Right Faith and Right Conduct are emphasised in the Jaina faith. As in Buddhism so also in Jainism, elevated contemplation is also insisted upon. Jainism and Buddhism equally represent Kshatriya movements against the caste egotism of the Brāhmaṇas.

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The sage could come from even the Chāṇḍāla caste in Jainism. Harikeśa-bala was born in a family of śvapachas and became a monk and sage. As in Buddhist so in Jain monachism, meticulous rules of conduct were laid down for the monks and the laity for preventing the destruction of life of any sentient creature whatsoever.

But Jainism, unlike Buddhism, insisted upon the laity's participation in some degree and for some time in the vows or regulations of the monastic life. Just as among the Jain monks there was a hierarchy of leaders and superiors, so also the laymen by accepting particular vows could improve their moral standard and approximate to the ideal of conduct set forth and practised by the order of monks. The practical genius of Mahāvīra is abundantly evident from his establishment of a four-fold order of his followers, comprising monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. Both laymen and laywomen could aspire to monkhood by accepting its discipline in stages. It was thus that Jainism, unlike Buddhism, produced through the generations a succession of godly men and women, who could endure the storm and stress that drove Buddhism out of India. The moral injunctions prohibiting the eating of animal foods, drinking, gambling, hunting, stealing, adultery and debauchery have produced high-souled men and women from the Jain laity, and thus strengthened the social hold of the religion in the country. Even now the Jains sing the praises of the ideal domestic woman, the chaste Sulasā:

> "Sulasā was a really faithful wife, there was no sham about her;
> She found no pleasure in worldly delights!
> If we see her face, sins would flee away,
> If we mention her name, our minds are filled with joy."

The Vows of Samyaka and Ahimsa in Jainism

Nor is Jainism a self-sufficient, individualistic creed as it is often thought. Two unique features of Jainism are the vows of Samyaka and Ahiṁsā. Samyaka is defined by Haribhadra thus: "He has rightly undergone the vow of Samyaka who has attained the attitude of equality, which makes him look at all kinds of living beings as he looks towards himself. It is only

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when a man learns to look upon all living beings with equality (samatva) that he can effect such a conquest over anger and hatred." The Jina, like the Jīvanamukta of the Vedānta, achieves a complete identity of his self with others. Thus we read in Ratnashekhara's Saṁbodha Sattari: "No matter whether he is a Śvetāṁbara or Digaṁbara, a Buddha or a follower of any other creed, one who has realised himself the self-sameness of the soul, i.e. one who looks on all creatures alike his own self, is sure to attain salvation." The Jaina doctrine of Ahiṁsā is also rooted in the conception of the universality and interdependence of Jīva, which comprises men, animals, insects and plants and also the elements of the earth, all regulated by the immutable law of karma. "As life is dear to me, so also is the case with other animals, and having seen such fruits who would be prepared to live by killing?" says Sulasā.

The essentials of Jainism are thus succinctly and pregnantly set forth by the Chāṇḍāla sage Harikeśa, whose penance overcame the limitations of his low birth. Approaching an enclosure where a Brahmanical sacrifice is taking place, he observes: "O Brāhmaṇas, why do you tend the fire, and seek external purity by water? The clever ones say that external purity, which you seek for, is not the right thing. The law is my pond, celebacy my bathing place, which is not turbid, and throughout clear for the soul; penance is my fire-place; right exertion is my sacrificial ladle; the body the dried cow-dung; karman is my fuel; self-control, right exertion and tranquillity are the oblations, praised by the sages, which I offer."

The Conceptions of the Tirthamkara and the Kevalin

The acme of Jaina perfection is represented by the two categories of human soul, viz., Tīrthaṁkara or Maker of the Order, who, in his bodily form but with boundless knowledge, righteousness and patience, goes about propagating the truth to the world for endless ages; and the Kevalin, who is without body and is untouched and unhindered by matter and can neither be worshipped nor adored by the world. The Tīrthaṁkara corresponds in some measure to the Avatāra in Brahmanism and the Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The descent of the Tīrthaṁkara in Jainism marks the revival of Dharma and the reorganisation of the four communities (tīrthas) of monks and

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nuns and the male and female laity. Into the four-fold order (chaturvidha saṁgha), all the followers of the preceding Tīrthaṁkaras now enter, and thus the cycle of Dharma continues for ever and ever.

The Jaina worship of Tīrthaṁkaras, which is now an established institution, hides the worship of God since the Tīrthaṁkara typifies all that is perfect and infinite in the soul of man, and at the same time undertakes the teaching of righteousness, faith and insight in the divine manner to those who worship him. With the introduction of the worship of the Tīrthaṁkaras in the second or first century B.C., in Jaina temples, no hard and fast distinction between Hinduism and Jainism could be made by the common people of India. It is note-worthy that the Sthānakavāsi sect among the Jains does not believe in idol worship.

The Spread of Jainism

For the elect the various stages of moral and spiritual ascent (guṇasthānas) of the human soul to the status of the Jīvanamukta and Kevali-siddha run parallel to the inner contemplative exercises in Brahmanical and Buddhist systems. But what is prescribed for the monks may also be practised by the laity though different sects differ in respect of what scriptures are permitted to be read by the laity or even by the nuns or what are intended for the elect. Jainism has maintained, on the whole, for more than two thousand years, a close and intimate connection and similarity of religious duties and attitudes between the monks and the laymen. This accounts for its immunity from the extraordinary doctrinal transformations experienced by Buddhism from within and the repercussions of life and conduct of its followers from without, that finally led to the disappearance of Buddhism in India. The layman desirous of the higher life accepts twelve vows that gently lead towards his capacity for monkhood with its stricter regulations. All through there is complete reliance upon self-culture and self-enlightenment that is expressed in the following daily-repeated hymn: "The soul is the maker and non-maker, and itself makes happiness and misery, is its own friend and its own foe, decides its own condition, good or evil, is its own river Veyaranī (Vaitaraṇī)."

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Slightly older than Buddhism but born and nurtured in the same region, Jainism had in fact a much less chequered history than the former. Within a few centuries after Mahāvīra's death Jainism spread to every part of India. The 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. were heydays of both Jainism and Buddhism. Soon after the Christian era Jainism spread over the whole of Western India, and its centre shifted from Magadha to Kathiawar, and subsequently also to Southern India. In the 7th century Hiuen-Tsang found Jainism dominant in Udra and fairly strong in Mahā-Kośala, Drāviḍa (capital Kānchī), Mahārāshṭra, and the Konkan. For wellnigh a thousand years from the meeting of the 2nd council of Jaina faith at Valabhī in 454 A. D. Jainism showed uninterrupted progress and expansion, spreading beyond the frontiers of India to Kāpiśa (as we learn from Hiuen-Tsang); while during the same period Buddhism passing through many vicissitudes simply took refuge in Bengal, Nepal and Tibet and ultimately vanished from India. It was largely because Jainism did not snap the bonds between the laity and the monks, nor rest merely on the monks and the monastic establishments, that it could survive both Hindu opposition and Muslim persecution. Jainism also made an effective rapprochement with Hinduism through its acceptance of its chief heroes, such as Rāmachandra, Krishna and others, and of the Brahmanical priesthood for officiating at various domestic ceremonies and even temple worship. Thus in the period of Muslim vandalism and oppression Jainism could easily hide itself in the capacious bosom of Hinduism, that has on the whole shown much respect and receptivity towards it in spite of occasional severe persecution.

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CHAPTER VII

THE MINISTRY OF GAUTAMA TATHĀGATA

Dharma-chakra-pravartana

Buddhism was in large measure the child and heir of Jainism. The Tathāgata, the founder of Buddhism, after renouncing his home seemed to have first visited Vaiśālī, "the motherland of Mahāvīra", to seek his teachers and to begin Ājīvika and Jaina austerities. Gautama in Pāli literature is the Tathāgata (tatra-āgata, He who has arrived there, i.e. Nirvāṇa as contrasted with Saṁsāra, or tatham-gato, He who has arrived at Truth or the Four Truths) or Leader or perhaps Follower who found the Right Way, followed the Right Way and showed the Right Way, and also the Buddho Bhagavā or the Enlightened and Blessed One. According to Buddhaghosha, Tathāgata is Tathāgada and means the One who is the Right Speaker, like the previous and future Buddhas, i.e. who speaks with omniscience, speaks at the right time and speaks the truth. The designation is, indeed, intended to be understood in many ways—the So-goer, the Right-farer, the Truth-finder or the Right-speaker. The earlier title used in the Aśokan edicts was the Buddha Śākyasiṁha. The great renunciation took place when Gautama, born and bred in luxury in the palace of King Śuddhodana of Kapilavastu, was only 29 years of age. We read in the Majjhima-Nikāya: "Before my enlightenment, while yet a Bodhisattva, I thought, oppressive is life in a house where it is not easy to practise a full, pure, and religious life..... While yet a boy, a black-haired youth in the prime of life, while my unwilling mother and father wept with tear-stained faces, I cut off my hair and beard and putting on yellow robes went forth from a home to a homeless life." For half a dozen years Buddha sought various teachers in various towns and cities including Vaiśālī, Rājagṛha and Uruvela. Soon he found that the way of self-mortification associated with penance (tapas), greatly in vogue among the

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Ājīvikas and Jainas, did not lead to the goal he sought. After this he took his bath in the river Nairañjanā and sat under a pipal tree at Bodh-Gayā where he at last attained the truth. After his Enlightenment he proceeded to Isipatana Mrigadāva (deer park) near Banaras where he delivered his first sermon. For the first time in the religious history of India the Buddha preached in the language of the common man, which he preferred to Sanskrit understood only by the upper classes. The basic principles of Buddhism are formulated in the famous Mrigadāva sermon called the Dharma-chakra-pravartana-sūtra. Man should follow the Middle Path by first grasping the Four Truths: (1) "the truth of pain" as manifest in birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow, lamentation, dejection and despair; (2) "the truth of the cause of pain", viz., craving for existence, passion, pleasure, leading to rebirth; (3) "the truth of cessation of pain" by ceasing of craving, by renunciation; and (4) "the truth of the way that leads to the cessation of pain", viz., the Middle Path (Majjhimā Paṭipadā) which avoids the two extremes (antas) of excessive attachment to worldly pleasures and excessive self-mortification and which is the noble Eight-fold Path (ārya āṣṭāngika mārga) consisting of "right views, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and concentration." From that moment till the day of his death at the age of eighty the Buddha's life was one of constant peregrination, ministry, conversion and service.

The Buddha as the Forerunner and the Renovator

Yet the Buddha never thought himself to be the founder of the Order (Saṁgha), or that it could depend wholly upon his direction and guidance. He loved to contemplate himself as a mere forerunner (pubbangamo) in the way. Rightly speaking, Buddhism is protestantism in the field of Hindu faiths, starting as it does from the fundamental Hindu backgrounds of the unity of life and the law of karma and man's inalienable moral responsibility. The Tathāgata, however, interpreted the Upaniṣadic unity of the Brahman as the collectivity of all sentient creatures (Khuddaka-Nikāya), united together by the bond of life, whence proceeds the Buddhist inculcation of the dynamic active virtues of altruism (Brahma-vihāra). He also rejected the ancient Hindu doctrine of personal rewards and punishments of karma from birth to birth on the basis of the non-existence of a permanent

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self (an-atta), and stressed that the consequences of karma are borne from generation to generation in the entire world collectively or finally by the eternal or universal Buddha. This last tenet wherein karma is reinstalled as a tremendous impersonal and cumulative moral force of the collectivity, and the evil thought or word or deed of a single individual is calculated to disrupt the entire fabric of society just as his good thought or word or deed relieves and uplifts generations of suffering mankind together, was the Tathāgata's reaction against the pernicious nihilism of some of the extreme contemporary heresies. The dominant stress on earnest and diligent striving for the holy life (brahmacharya), and self-transcending love and charity, demolishing the boundaries of the transient ego, was Buddhism's supreme challenge to the arid intellectualism, scepticism, and individualism of the age. It is these that indeed accounted for the immediate success of the Tathāgata's ministry, and the enthusiasm it aroused among the people. Neither the doctrine of the origin and cessation of sorrow through desirelessness, nor that of the endless cycle of saṁsāra and karma, nor again "homelessness" and asceticism was new. What was supremely novel, and satisfied the social and intellectual needs of the age, was the combination of the doctrine of an-atta and futility of the gods, rituals, austerities and powers (iddhis) of Hinduism with a dynamic and collectivist, and not sad and egoistical, interpretation of karma, binding together, ever onward, from generation to generation, the moral life of the entire human community. This provided the basis of the metaphysical justification of charity, altruism and service as leading to the peace and serenity of the Buddha's Nirvāṇa, and the necessary moral impulsion for the rapid propagation of the new religion. "Since to every man the self is dear, let him see he harms no one." The identification of amity (mettā) with wisdom (prajñā) that belonged to the earlier Upaniṣadic teaching supplied the basis of the new religious gospel. The real significance of the first of the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha, viz., everything is Impermanent, Ill and Suffering, is that unless man abandons the notion of individuality he must suffer. This leads to Serenity, Love and Compassion. Buddhism is unique among the religions of the world in investing the metaphysical doctrines of self and not-self with the highest moral import. The dynamic character of self-knowledge

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in early Buddhism is indicated in the Aṅguttara-Nikāya where it is pointed out that a monk is called "self-knowing" (attaññū) when he knows: "So far am I advanced in faith, virtue, learning, renunciation, wisdom, and illumination." This ideal of practical virtue, compassion, wisdom and illumination contained wholesome and active social elements and was in consonance with the early missionary preoccupation and monastic zeal of Buddhism. What Buddhism gave to the world was not only philosophy but also ethics which captured the hearts of the people of India. Thus men flocked to the Buddha from various paths of life, rich and poor, high and low, speaking different tongues and belonging to different religions, and they were called Śākyaputtiya Śramaṇas. The great cities and towns of the holy land of the Ganges with which his ministry was associated were Gayā, Rājagṛha, Vaiśālī, Banaras, Kapilavastu, Śrāvastī, Sāketa and Kauśāmbī. It is note-worthy that both Jainism and Buddhism made greater headway in Magadha and Aṅga which were full of mixed and non-Aryan stocks and where Brahmanism was less strongly entrenched than in the western parts of the Ganges valley. The people of Magadha are described in the Atharva-Veda as Vrātyas who were outside the pale of orthodox Aryan civilization and found it difficult even to speak Sanskrit.

The Personality of the Buddha

The Buddha's fame, however, came from "perfection in conduct and righteousness", says a contemporary report. Kings Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru of Magadha and King Prasenajit of Kośala venerated him; princes, generals, nobles, merchants, matted-hair ascetics and the common people all came under his spell. The merchant Anāthapiṇḍika acquired the park of Prince Jeta at Śrāvastī for the Buddha's retreat with carts of gold so as to cover the entire grove with the gold pieces. And yet he was humble and unostentatious to the core of his heart. "Let me be", says the Buddha, "a physician to the sick, a friend to all men, a very sweeper for humility." Once Sāriputta mentioned to the Buddha in sincere veneration that he regarded him as the greatest or wisest man in the world. The Buddha mildly rebuked him, naively pointing out that he could never have known any Buddhas of the past nor of the future, nor could he

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penetrate even his own mind thoroughly. "Then why, Sāriputta, are your words so grand and bold?"

An alert, forceful and genial personality with immaculate purity of heart, profound simplicity and austerity of life and deep tenderness and sympathy for the frailties, delusions and sorrows of man, the Buddha is one of the most charming, yet vigorous, figures in history. In an age of elaborate ceremonial, superstition, self-indulgence and metaphysical hair-splitting, the Buddha preaches in India the Middle Path (Majjhimā Paṭipadā) between cruel self-torture and the life of desire, between intellectual gymnastics and crude, futile scepticism. The Buddha stresses compassion, charity and service, but at the same time sets the limits of benevolence thus: "Benevolence to all men, attachment to none." The gods of popular Hinduism such as "the four great kings at the four quarters of the firmament" are rejected by the Buddha. Sakka, Brahmā Sahampati, Mahākālanāga-rājā and other deities, all suffer discomfiture from Māra's army whom, however, the human Tathāgata vanquishes. The Buddha enjoins the house-holder's duties towards fellowmen that are preferred to rituals and offerings to deities. He, indeed, places Man above the gods and spirits (devatās), insisting that the Dhamma is essential for "the good and the gain and weal of men and devatās" alike. This is entirely in consonance with the teachings of the Upaniṣadic Rishis and the Yoga practices of the age which the Tathāgata adopts and absorbs from Brahmanism with an emphasis, however, on moral adventure rather than on worship, service to society rather than extreme asceticism, and serenity of mind or nirvāṇa in present life rather than heaven (svarga) in the future. The overall emphasis of the Buddha is on universal Love, Compassion and Charity, indicated in both the inculcation of Mettā (Love), the first of the holy integrative and harmonising attitudes (Brahmavihāra), and the Messianic promise of Metteyya (Maitreya, the leading deity in the Mahāyāna), the Buddha to come. The metaphysical basis is the ultimate unity of the universe—"the great ocean profound, immeasurable, unfathomable" (Saṁyutta-Nikāya). This is called in the Dīgha-Nikāya (sutta 13) a state of union with Brahman in Upaniṣadic fashion. But the union is the totality of all beings (satta) and is achieved through Charity and Love (Mettā)—the abolition of the barriers set up by

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egoism through moral adventure and effort (Sammāvayāmo); it is not negativist but essentially practical. The Buddha's call is the call to intellectual sanity, moral alertness, spiritual depth and humanitarian service. His yoga method on the basis of Samyaka, in its comprehensive character, is "dignified, rational, effective and progressive", in the words of the Dhammapada.

The Many-sidedness of His Gospel

The serene, compassionate man, perhaps the greatest of mortals, towering aloft in profound tranquillity and peace, undefiled and uncontaminated, like the loftiest peak of the Himalayas, had a unique sense of realism, balance and proportion as well as religious depth, sincerity and charity. To the disconsolate Kīsā Gotamī, mourning the loss of her only child, the great teacher says: "Go, gather mustard seed, but gather it at a house which death has not visited." The mother finds that death and sorrow are universal. She obtains solace as she thinks to herself: "How selfish am I in my grief: Death is common to all; yet in this valley of desolation there is a path that leads one to immortality who has surrendered all selfishness." The Buddha accepts her as his disciple and says: "As all earthen vessels made by the potter end in being broken, so is the life of mortals. In whatever manner people think a thing will come to a pass, it is often different when it happens, and great is the disappointment; see, such are the terms of the world. He who seeks peace should draw out the arrow of lamentation and complaint and grief." To the person addicted to carnal desires the Buddha points out the meanness and vileness of sensualism, the impermanence of all things and the profit of freedom from desire (tanhā) which sets ablaze the world with universal hate, lust and infatuation. If one realises life as evanescent and sorrowful he can have no tanhā. To the poor, wretched, miserable leper, seeing the teacher in the midst of a big crowd and expecting an almsgiving of food, both hard and soft, he gives not alms but insight. The leper is softened, roused, set free, and made happy by the teacher's pious words. To the cowherd, who describes to the Buddha the docility and goodness of his wife and asks him: "Rain down, God, if thou wilt", the teacher replies: "My mind, it is a docile one, set free. Full many a day I tamed it down and shaped it to my will. No evil now is found in me." To the ascetic with his tangled locks

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the teacher says: "Better than matted locks and ashes are insight and self-mastery." For the amelioration of the miserable lot of the slaves (dāsas), "beaten, branded, imprisoned and poorly rationed" by their masters and mistresses, the Buddha insists on humane and compassionate treatment and provision of food and dainties in proportion to the work done. A certain monk is suffering from dysentery and lies where he has fallen down in his own excrements. The teacher washes him and lays him on the bed and says to the other monks: "Brethren, ye have no mother and no father to take care of you. If you will not take care of each other, who else, I ask, will do so? Brethren, whoever would tend me, he should tend the sick." To the Brāhmaṇas devoted to sacrifice, he teaches that he is the true Brāhmaṇa who leads a pure life and that kind of sacrifice is nobler, less difficult and at the same time bears greater fruit and profit, which is non-injury to life, abstention from taking of what is not given, freedom from wrong conduct, from lusts and from falsehoods. Brahmanical contemplation and culture the Buddha adopted—Brahmacharya or the holy living and Brahmavihāra or the cultivation of the four altruistic holy attributes, viz., love, pity, sympathy and serenity—but he condemned the exhibition and misuse of secret ritual powers (śila-bhatā-parāmāso) as well as sacrifices of animals, offerings to Agni, base arts and magical practices. To his own kinsmen, the Kshatriyas, the Buddha enjoins: "All men tremble at punishment, all men love life. Remember that you are like unto them and do not cause slaughter." Or again to a young layman, who is over-zealous in his genuflections to the Hindu deities of the six regions with joined palms, the teacher stresses duties to fellowmen classified into six categories, viz., parents and teachers, wife and child, friends, kinsmen, slaves and labourers and religious devotees, who will respectively protect north, south, east, west, the nadir and the zenith. Thus all directions will be peaceful, without fears.

The Buddha's respect for the dignity of the common man is clearly indicated by his injunction for his protection and security, as recorded in the Singāḷovāda-Sutta. In five respects the slaves and labourers must be treated fairly "for supporting the earth" by their superior—by arranging their work according to their strength, by providing their food and wages (vetana), by ministering to them in sickness, by the distribution of ample

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medicines and delicacies (rasanam), by granting leave at times. And the slaves and labourers show goodwill to their superior in five respects. They rise early; they lie down late; they are honest (dinnadāyī); they are efficient workers and bring him renown and fame. Again, a householder's goal is wealth, wisdom is his ambition, a craft is his resolve, work is his want and perfected work his fulfilment. The above is Confucian in its spirit and sanity.

The courtesan Ambapāli in order to meet the Buddha causes many sumptuous chariots to be made ready, mounts on one and goes out from Vaiśālī to the village Koṭigāma. In the morning the Buddha comes to the place where the food distribution of the wealthy courtesan was going on. When the Buddha, having eaten, withdraws his hand from the bowl, Ambapāli, the Indian Mary Magdalene, sits down on one side and says: "I give, revered Sir, this Ambapāli grove to the mendicant community." The Buddha accepts the gift. The asceticism and serenity of the Buddha and the frivolity, falsehood and luxury of woman, "unfathomably deep like a fish's course in the water," are poles asunder. Yet the Buddha accepted women into the Order as nuns, not however without grave misgivings, yielding to the piety and pressure of his foster-mother, Mahā-prajāpatī. All the same it was the unstinted charity and munificence of women such as Vishākhā of Śrāvastī, Ambapāli of Vaiśālī and Suppiyā of Banaras that were largely responsible for the maintenance of the young order. To Kīsā Gotamī, the beautiful maiden of noble Śākyan family, who used to gaze at the Buddha when not yet a monk from the upper terrace of her mansion, and loved him with a woman's love, breathing forth the cry: "Happy, indeed, are his mother and his father and his wife, of whom such an one is lord", he says that happiness lies not in the satisfaction of desire and craving but in their eradication and Kīsā Gotamī, as we have seen, later became a nun and ultimately an arhat in the Buddhist order. Buddhism reproaches sex as the fertile source of evil desire, entanglement and sorrow, and relegates it to a realm whence it can never tarnish the bright mirror of knowledge with dirt and dust. Yaśodharā, the sad forsaken wife of the Buddha, and Kīsā Gotamī, the sorrowful mother who as a Kshatriya maiden had intimacy with the Buddha in his youth, have both become in the eyes of the Order mere nonentities in the impersonal life and discipline of the nunnery.

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The Buddha's humility was profound and sincere and touched everybody. Kings, such as Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru of Magadha and Prasenajit of Kośala, Brahman teachers, such as Poksharadi, and merchant princes, like Anāthapiṇḍika, bowed before him, yet he would go regularly from door to door in a city or village, with the alms-bowl in hand, waiting silently for the morsel of his daily food. In one cold winter, when the sharp cutting wind was blowing, he was found resting on a couch of leaves in deep contemplation in the Simsapā forest at Alavī. Though he had little patience with his disciples who showered praises on him, he showed infinite patience with his detractors. Unmoved by abuse or slander, he would say: "Abuse that is not answered is like the food rejected by the guest which reverts to the host."

The Buddha, like Christ, often spoke in parables, for by a parable, he says, "many a wise man perceives the meaning of what is being said". Apt similies and metaphors run through his discourses, interspersed here and there with fable, romance and poetic embellishment. The soul of Buddhism, the impermanence of life, can hardly be more sublimely expressed than in these poetic words: "A path of many births and deaths have I vainly traversed, seeking the builder of the house; full of suffering in birth (recurring) over and over again. Now have I seen thee, O builder of the house; thou shalt not again build the house. Thy rafters are all broken, the battlements of the house are demolished. The soul having escaped changeability has attained the end of desire."

The Conception of Nirvana

The Buddha abhorred display of superhuman powers such as divination, sooth-saying, thought-reading, foretelling and forecasting as meriting total and immediate expulsion from the Order. He also condemned transcendental speculations. Reaching Nirvāṇa he was silent about it due to profound reverence. Goethe says: "The highest is silence." In the intellectual and spiritual climate of the Buddha's days there was profound appreciation of the Absolute, the Supreme Reality, the Universal Self that comes to one through contemplation. A similar illumination came to the Buddha. The Buddha defines it thus: "It is that state of intellect (viññānam) which is invisible, boundless,

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the landing stage from everywhere". "In this sphere there is neither earth nor water, light nor air, neither this world nor that world, both sun and moon, neither infinity of space nor infinity of consciousness, nor nothingness." This is almost identical with profound passages in the Upaniṣads. The Buddha also asserts that the supreme knowledge is also Loveliness and Beauty. Nirvāṇa is abiding in the Beautiful. The Buddha himself distinguishes between his Nirvāṇa and the Brahma-nirvāṇa of the Upaniṣads in the Majjhima-Nikāya. The Buddha's Nirvāṇa, though characterised like Brahma-nirvāṇa by negative phrases (neti-neti), reveals Reality as becoming, a dynamic process (paticca-samuppāda), instead of the static unity of some Upaniṣadic seers. And yet only silence can do justice to this state of super-consciousness (abhi-sambodhi).

"The Buddha has no metaphysical theories", says the Majjhima; nor had he any solicitude for discussion about transcendental experiences with contemporary sophists. "What is not revealed conduces to no profit, nor is concerned with the holy life," observes the Buddha whose gospel is a standing invitation to a Way of Living (Ehi-passiko or the doctrine of 'come and examine'). The Buddha's teaching begins and ends with Enlightenment. On the whole he concentrates on moral aim and purpose. "Just as children play with little sand-castles and are amused by . . . . and set store by them as long as they have fancies, so we play with our bodies, feelings, perceptions, activities and consciousness. As we cease to have any desire and craving, we no longer play with them. The destruction of craving is Nibbāna." Thus teaches the Saṁyutta-Nikāya.

The Buddha's Emphasis on Moral Alertness and Striving

It is the sanity and sincerity of the Buddha's simple moral teachings, summarised in three brief imperatives, "Do good to others; Cease from evil, hate and injury; and Purify the mind", that attracted kings, nobles, merchants and the common men and women of India. True, the common people complained that "the ascetic brought childlessness, widowhood and subversion of families", but they all adored him in deep reverence. Once the Śākyas and the Mallas were preparing for an armed fight about riparian rights, and the river would have been a stream of blood but for the intervention of the Buddha whom all venerated.

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"Lo! As some mighty elephant superb
Amidst Himalayan forest-trees he goes;
So rapt in contemplation breathing deep,
And calm in body as in mind serene.
As some pure lotus bloometh undefiled,
So liveth he, the Uncontaminate."

At the age of eighty, after forty-four years of his ministry spent in continuous, untiring labour for fellowmen, when the Tathāgata found his life gradually ebbing away, he declared to his favourite disciple Ānanda, the aim and purpose of the fraternity. "I am now frail Ānanda, I am aged, I am an old man, who has finished the pilgrimage and reached old age; eighty years old am I... Be ye to yourselves, Ānanda, your own lamp (atta-dīpa), your own refuge (atta-saraṇa), seek no other refuge. Let the truth be your lamp and your refuge, seek no other refuge."

On the eve of his death the travel-worn teacher lies down between two śāla trees at Kuśīnagara with one foot resting on the other, calm and composed, and speaks to Ānanda: "See Ānanda, all abloom are the twin śāla trees: with untimely blossoms do they shower down upon the body of the Tathāgata, they sprinkle it, cover it up, in the worship of the Tathāgata. Enough Ānanda, sorrow not, lament not. Have I not said to you ere now, Ānanda, in all things dear and delightful there is the element of change, of separation, of otherness." Then says he to the assembled disciples: "Hearken, O disciples, I charge ye: every thing that cometh into being passeth away: strive without ceasing." These are the Buddha's last words.

Buddhism as a Social Egalitarian Movement

Both the great religious movements, Jainism and Buddhism, rejected the authority of the Vedas, condemned ceremonialism and sacrifice of animals, and broke away from the caste system. The Buddha again and again stresses that a true Brāhmaṇa is not one who is born in the Brāhmaṇa family but he who behaves as a Brāhmaṇa. "The station of Brāhmaṇa", he says, "is not due to birth but to abhorrence of the world and its pleasure." Again, "not by birth is one an outcaste (Vasalo) or a Brāhmaṇa, by act one is an outcaste or a Brāhmaṇa", observes the Sutta-nipāta. In the Majjhima-Nikāya there is a conversation between the Buddha and a Brāhmaṇa youth, Assalāyana. The Buddha refutes

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the claims of the Brāhmaṇas to form the best caste, significantly pointing out that nobles, merchants and workers can all show a heart of love, kindliness and peaceableness and by right conduct arise after death in a heaven-world. In some of the adjoining districts there are only two 'castes'—masters and slaves—and (a member of) the master (caste) can become (a member of) the slave (caste), and vice versa. A class stratification cuts across the boundaries of castes. All the four castes, nobles, priests, merchants and workers, may be endowed with the five qualities to be striven after: faith, health, honesty, output of energy and wisdom. In such a case there is not any difference, that is to say, in freedom as against freedom. Thus the Buddha lays down "the purity of the four castes": the noble, priestly, merchant and worker. The Buddhist Order was thrown open to all castes; examples of low castes being admitted, like the nobles and Brāhmaṇas, were Upāli, the barber, a vulture-tormentor and the wives of a poor straw-plaiter and a basket-weaver. There was in fact no ban against the admission of even the Chāṇḍālas, Pakkusas and Patikas, a few of whom were admitted to the Buddhist fraternity. The Buddha preaches the oneness of mankind. "Behold the grass and trees, reptiles, animals, birds and winged creatures. Each after its kind bears a native mark. In man there is not manifold, nothing specific is in men's bodies found: the difference in men is nominal", says the Sutta-nipāta. All castes and classes, except the Chāṇḍālas, were admitted to instruction in the universities and educational institutions of the times. The Buddha was the first great Indian Protestant to restore and re-interpret the true metaphysical theory of varṇa in its functional and spiritual sense. As a matter of fact in the Nikāyas and the Vinaya, the Kshatriya comes first and then the Brāhmaṇa in the specification of the four castes; the Brāhmaṇa being synonymous with the holy man, and having little to do with caste or birth. Again, Buddhism went further than Jainism in discarding the worship of Hindu gods and the service of the Brahmanical priesthood. This helped the social egalitarian movement, especially the complete observance of caste equality in the Order. "Just as all the great rivers, viz. Gangā, Jamuna, Achirāvatī (Rāptī), Sarabhū, Mahī, when they reach the great ocean, even so, mendicant brothers, these four castes Kshatriyas, Brāhmaṇas, Vaiśyas, Śūdrās, when they go forth from the home

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to the homeless life, lose their former names and families and are denominated as devotees and disciples of the Śākyan."

Both Jainism and Buddhism gave a new tilt to the Indian scheme of life by stressing that a person can choose the life of contemplation and monkhood at any stage without going through the preparatory stations of student-discipleship, family and vocation that was the rule in orthodox society. Parents found it sometimes difficult to maintain discipline in the family lest the sons betook to the Order. Thus did both these new movements exaggerate the spirit of "other-worldliness" that can, however, be easily explained by the dominance of priests, theologians, sophists and rationalists during the period. Jainism more than Buddhism used the laity more, and hence was a less disturbing factor in Indian social life.

The Dhamma of Compassion

But the most remarkable and enduring contribution of these protestant movements was the great emphasis on non-violence, compassion and love. Particularly was the stress on a positive social ethics significant in Buddhism that declared that "all other ways are not worth a fraction of the way of goodwill or mettā". "As a mother even with her life protects her child, her own and only son, so let one cultivate a loving heart (mānasam) without measure towards all living beings. Let one cultivate a loving heart (metta-citto) without measure throughout the world, above, below, from side to side, unstinted, without strife, without rivalry." Thus observes the Khuddaka-Nikāya. In the Brahmajāla Sutta we read about a bewildering variety of metaphysical speculations and spiritual experiences reaching an almost incredible extravagance at that time in India, while asceticism amongst vast numbers of śramaṇas and ājīvikas of different orders also reached an unheard of severity and self-torture. The Buddha was no metaphysical idealist but was a sane practical teacher of the highest spiritual profundity, intellectual acumen and moral calibre. Even in the Upaniṣads in spite of the self-transcendent, all-encompassing knowledge there is not much of moral fervour. The wisdom of the Upaniṣads achieves a sublime ethical neutrality. Good and evil belong to the sphere of phenomenal existences, from which release is sought by lonely meditation in which the distinctions of right and

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wrong, virtue and vice completely disappear. Says Yājñavalkya: "The man who desires the Self is not followed by good or evil; for he has then overcome all the sorrows of the heart." The Buddha's Middle Path which steered clear of both self-indulgence and self-mortification, and also incorporated "right conduct" or moral dharma as an indispensable element in the Noble Aryan Eight-fold Way was a return to the more ancient Indian wisdom.

"Dhamma, I will declare to thee,
Mettagu, said the Master then,
A thing seen here, not lore come down,
The which who finds and knows and fares
Alert, may cross the world's foul mire."

Again, "Dhamma is the Truth, the Conscience, the Law, the King of Kings, the Turner of the Wheel, the matchless Victory in the struggle. Monks, teach Dhamma which is lovely at the beginning, lovely in the middle, lovely at the ending. Walk, monks, on tour for the blessing of the many-folk, for the happiness of the many-folk, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the blessing, the happiness of gods and men." The Buddha is not only the greatest son of India, but he is also one of the greatest men born; his life and message have an abiding significance for troubled humanity.

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PART III

THE INTERCHANGE BETWEEN INDIAN AND FOREIGN CIVILIZATIONS

MAURYAN CULTURE AND PAN-INDIANISM (ĀRYABHĀVA)

CHAPTER VIII

THE EMPIRE FROM THE IRANIAN PLATEAU TO THE INDIAN OCEAN:

The North-west under the Achæmenian and Macedonian Empires

It is remarkable that the establishment of the first and most extensive Indian Empire by Chandragupta Maurya, larger than even the British dominion immediately followed the subjugation of a considerable portion of the north-west by the Iranians and the Greeks. Maurya imperialism was the Indian reaction to the pressure and danger from the Iranian and Hellenic domination of India.

In 518 B. C. Darius conquered Eastern Iran and thence organised an expedition for the subjugation of the Punjab. A Greek sailor was also commissioned to explore the Indus basin and return home by sea from the mouth of the Indus. In the early inscriptions of Darius (520—486 B. C.) we find Gāndhāra, the area round Peshawar and Rawalpindi, included as his tributary region. Later on Darius' empire included the Indus valley as far as the deserts of Rajputana. Thus did the trans-Indus region, the Hidoo (Sindhu), become the twentieth and richest satrapy of the Achæmenian Empire, paying an annual tribute of 360 Euboic talents of gold (over £ 1 million). Darius styled himself in one of his inscriptions as "Kshāythiyānām Kshāyāthiya"—the king of kings—the title being reminiscent of what is used in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.

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One important result of the Indus valley and the north-west becoming an integral part of the Achæmenian Empire was the development of the Kharoshthī alphabet which was an adaptation of Aramaic to the requirements of Indian phonetics and was current in the north-west in preference to the essentially Indian Brāhmī till the fourth century A.D. An inscription in Aramaic, the script of the Achæmenian bureaucracy, assigned to the first half of the third century B. C., was found at Sirkap in Taxila and was issued by Aśoka, since here the ruler is mentioned as Priyadarśin. The use of Aramaic in the Aśokan inscription was obviously intended for the benefit of people from Iran and the West who were in Taxila and could not understand the local dialect.

Within another century the Persian Empire became too feeble at its easternmost boundary in India and a large number of small states, including several republican communities, arose and freed themselves from the Persian yoke. Alexander of Macedon subjugated the Persian Empire and invaded India in 326 B. C. for reconquering the eastern satrapy of the Achæmenian Empire. The small republican tribes and communities showed valiant resistance but lacked organisation, unity and leadership. The Paurava king, no doubt assembled a vast horde of infantry, chariots and elephants but the heavy rain and storm overnight made it impossible for the Indian army, especially the war chariot and elephant units, to manoeuvre in the slush. The Macedonians broke the serried ranks of 30,000 soldiers on foot, while the elephants wounded by the mounted Macedonian archers played havoc among the Indian infantry. It was a brief but a memorable combat followed by the invading army crossing the Chenab and the Ravi and moving on to the Beas subjugating the various kingdoms and tribal territories on the way. The war-worn rank and file of the Greek army, however, refused to march further towards the Ganges valley. Alexander in chagrin now turned his steps towards the Jhelum. Many principalities of the lower Punjab and Sind were next subjugated. Alexander finally left India in 325 B. C. and marching through the deserts of Baluchistan reached Babylon where he suddenly died in 323 B. C.

In order to set little bits of Hellas down in India, Greek garrisons were stationed in Pushkalāvatī, Aornos and other

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towns on the great rivers; three satrapies under Persian or Macedonian viceroys were created in the areas west of the Jhelum, and three vassal states under Indian kings, namely Pāurava, Āmbhī and the ruler of Abhisāra were also created. Shortly, however, there were revolts in the Greek camp and great unrest among the Indian Malloi (Mālavas) and the Oxydrakai (Kshudrakas).

The Sarvabhauma Rajya of Chandragupta Maurya

At this juncture Chandragupta emerged on the scene as the leader of India's determined struggle for the expulsion of the Greeks. Justin records: "India after Alexander's death, as if the yoke of servitude had been shaken off her neck, had put his Prefects to death. (The Satraps Nica-nor and Philippos were both assasinated.) Sandrocottus (Chandragupta) was the leader who achieved this freedom .... He was born in humble life .... Having collected a band of 'robbers', he instigated the Indians to overthrow the existing (Nanda) government .... He was thereafter preparing to attack Alexander's Prefects, mounted on an elephant which fought vigorously in front of the army."

Chandragupta was assisted by the Brāhmaṇa Chāṇakya, his teacher, friend and guide, in collecting his troops and forming alliances with the smaller states. As a matter of fact Alexander's conquest and political integration of the various principalities and republican tribes favoured Chandragupta's task of presenting a strong united front against the foreigners. Chandragupta who had already acquired sufficient knowledge of military science in the military academy of Taxila seems to have met the Macedonian conqueror personally, and learnt something of Greek strategy and tactics, especially the phalanx movement which enabled him to overcome his Prefects in battle.

Before long Chandragupta overthrew Nanda, the wicked and unpopular ruler of Magadha. That event was so significant and unexpected that it became legend, and was not merely utilized in the Sanskrit drama Mudrārākshasa (of the seventh century A. D.), but also graphically described in the Buddhist text, Mahāvaṁśaṭīkā, and in the Jain text Sthavirāvalī Charita. At the end of his reign Chandragupta foiled the ambitions of Seleukos, Alexander's general, who held Babylon, and in trying to extend his empire crossed the Indus in 305 B. C. Seleukos had

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to come to terms with Chandragupta to whom he ceded the four Greek Satrapies of Paropanisadai (Kabul), Aria (Herat), Arachosia (Kandahar), and Gedrosia (Baluchistan) in return for 500 elephants. Aśoka mentions in two of his rock edicts that the Syrian Emperor Antiochus was his immediate neighbour, occupying territory on his frontier (an Anta or a Pratyanta king), but does not refer to Diodotus, the ruler of Bactria, presumably because he was a former governor who became a rebel and carved out his own kingdom (about 250 B. C.) by revolting against the Seleucid sovereign, Antiochus Theos.

The Mauryan Empire was separated from the Seleucid Empire by the Hindukush, extending south-westward from the Pamir knot on the north to the highlands rising above Herat, thus covering the northern boundary of modern Afghanistan. Beyond the Hindukush in the Oxus basin lay the empire of Seleukos. The borderlands within the Mauryan Empire included, therefore, Gāndhāra, Kāpiśa, Ariana (Herat), Drangiana (Seistan), Arachosia (Kandahar) and Gedrosia (Baluchistan). It will thus appear that the Mauryan Empire controlled all the highways from Central Asia to India.

Alexander the Great entered Afghanistan by the Hari Rud Valley which separates the chain of the Hindukush from that of Koh-i-Baba. Thence he marched southward along the depressions into Drangiana, then along the Helmand basin to Kandahar and Kabul. After his detour across the Bamiyan passes to Bactria, he penetrated into the Kabul valley for the invasion of India and crossed the Indus near Attock, one of his generals in charge of another division using the Khyber route to India. On his return journey from Thatta on the Indus he wished to march by the Makran coast route, but being deflected by the suffering of his army took the inland route across the Bampur valley. Another part of his army, which had elephants, went back by the Bolan route to Kandahar. Thus the entry and return of Alexander's armies covered the major routes of the Indian frontier and Iranian plateau.

Centuries later Hiuen-Tsang came from Bactria down the Hindukush, "the Snow Mountains", along the caravan route over the passes to get to Bamiyan, the capital of Kāpiśa in the centre of the mountain range. Kāpiśa, due to its central position, commands the principal passes of the Hindukush and consequently

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the great lines of communication between India and the Oxus basin. From Kāpiśa and Lampaka the road lies straight and easy through the Kabul valley and the rich province of Gandhara across the Khyber pass to India. The entire region enjoyed more abundant rainfall and agricultural prosperity for a whole millennium after Alexander's invasion than at present.

The strategic importance of these ancient sites on the Indian border-lands is clearly indicated by the extensive Kushan empire having its three centres of power—Kāpiśa commanding the passes of the Hindukush and the high roads to Bactria and Central Asia; Purushapura (Peshawar) in Gāndhāra, the gateway to the Indus valley, well protected by a girdle of mountains and rivers; and Mathurā the gateway to the Ganges valley in the East. In the Maurya Empire the famous Uttarapatha must have led from the well-fortified frontier towns of Kāpiśī, Maśakāvatī, Varaṇā, Pushkalāvatī and Takṣaśilā to Hastināpura, Kāśī and Pāṭalīputra. Not only overland trade with Central and Western Asia but also military defence against northern invaders was facilitated by the Royal Road resembling that of the Persian Empire. Chandragupta Maurya by his occupation of Gāndhāra, Kāpiśa and the Helmand valley effectively blocked both the Khyber and Bolan routes of invasion, made famous in history by successive invaders from Alexander the Great to Ahmed Shah Abdali. Thus for the first and the last time the natural political frontiers of the Indian empire were extended to the borders of Iran. India cannot enjoy lasting stability without conquest of, or amity with, all the peoples and states in the plateau intervening between Iran and the Land of the Five Rivers. The treaty with the Greeks was cemented by a marriage between the Maurya Emperor and a Greek Princess. A Greek envoy, Megasthenes, who was in Arachosia for many years and must have learnt the prakrit language of the frontier, was sent by Seleukos to the Imperial court of Pāṭalīputra.

Plutarch mentions that Chandragupta also subdued the whole of India; he had by this time under his command 600,000 infantry, 300,000 cavalry, 9,000 elephants and a great company of chariots. Before his death the Emperor relinquished his throne and lived as a Jain ascetic at Sravana Belgola in Mysore, according to literature and epigraphic records. The choice of this distant place and Aśoka's reference in his inscriptions that

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his immediate neighbours in the south (antāḥ) were Cholas, Pāṇḍyas and others lead my brother Radhakumud Mookerjee to the conclusion that the first Maurya Empire included Śravaṇa Belgola within its limits and that North and South were for the first time unified by Chandragupta under one paramount sovereignty, thus fulfilling the traditional conception of Sārvabhāuma rāja, Ekarāṭ or Samrāṭ.

Contributions of Chanakya, the Harbinger of Brahmana Supremacy

Chandragupta owed not merely his early education but also the success of his alliances, political conquests and administration largely to Chāṇakya, a Brāhmaṇa of encyclopædic knowledge and political astuteness and statesmanship, who on his part satisfied his great ambition of establishing a Kshatriya ascendency in India through the supersession of the unrighteous Śūdra rule of the Nandas. Chāṇakya, according to the Buddhist text Vaṁsatthappakāsinī, obtained his mastery of all the Śāstras from the schools of Taxila, where he was born and where he educated Chandragupta from boyhood in many sciences and practical arts. It was also Chāṇakya who formulated the severe penal code of the Mauryas as well as the bulk of imperial administrative measures and procedures, moulded by the new requirements of centralised government as the first Indian empire was founded and consolidated. He was, in fact, the real maker of the Maurya empire and the harbinger of later Brāhmaṇa supremacy. In his time the Kshatriya was at the head of the four varṇas, "fair in colour, fine in presence, stately to behold", as we read in the Dialogues of the Buddha. The Kshatriyas were the warriors, counsellors and officers of the state, mentioned as the Rājanna and Rājabhogga in the Jātaka literature. The Brāhmaṇs came next and were distinguishable into religious and secular Brāhmaṇs. The religious Brāhmaṇs used to follow their ancient occupation of teaching in their forest retreats. The Jātakas mentioned 1,000 kahāpaṇas as the usual honorarium given to the Brāhmaṇ teachers for a whole course.

Magasthenes mentions that the Brāhmaṇ would also attend the great assembly convened by the King for committing any useful suggestion to writing, observing any means of improving crops and cattle or promoting public interest in any other

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manner. "In requital he received valuable gifts and privileges", including daily pension varying from 100 to 1,000 kahāpaṇas and exemption from taxation and confiscation. Thus the Brāhmaṇ's functions continued to be service, contemplation, study and teaching according to the ancient Varṇa-dharma, and the forest hermitage, where he went after giving up his family and occupation, was frequently met with in Maurya India. But side by side with the teacher and the recluse, became now prominent the scheming, worldly Brāhmaṇ. Against the Ājīvika, Jain and Buddhist emphasis of asceticism and renunciation of home and social obligations in Maurya times, Chāṇakya, the champion of the ancient Brāhmaṇ orthodoxy, re-interpreted the Varnāśrama dharma on the basis of the ancient metaphysical principles and discouraged premature renunciation without the formal sanction of legal authorities and adequate provision for the family. This was a natural concomitant of Mauryan empire-building.

Indian Imperial Notions of Arya Citizenship and Secularisation

In the Arthaśāstra, the symbol and embodiment of a new imperial policy, we come across the expression Āryabhāva that in some measure corresponds to the Roman imperial notion of common culture and citizenship. "It is no crime for the Mlechchhas to sell or mortgage the life of their own off-spring. But never shall an Ārya be subjected to slavery." The Ārya is a free born citizen of the Mauryan empire. No Śūdra can be enslaved for he also "breathes the breath of the Ārya" (Ārya-prāṇa). The son of an Ārya can never be a slave. "The offspring of a man who has sold himself off as a slave shall be an Ārya". Thus did the imperial decree abolish the ancient custom of hereditary slavery. A slave woman taken as wife by an Ārya acquires freedom along with her children. A slave is not only entitled to the inheritance of his father, but can also purchase his freedom through his own earnings over and above those in his master's service. "On paying the value (for which one is enslaved) a slave shall regain his Āryahood. The same rule shall apply to born or pledged slaves." The kinsmen of a slave can and should free him from bondage by payment of ransom. The manumission of slaves and the stress of the privileges of the Ārya, the encroachment upon which is punishable, is a systematic attempt on the part of a

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secular state to abolish slavery virtually for all and to ground the incidence of Āryahood on culture rather than on class and birth. This did not escape the discerning eye of the Greek ambassador Megasthenes who paid a glowing tribute to Indian culture on this account and observed also that both the philosophical theory and law favoured the treatment of all as free men. Onesicritus also corroborated that in Sind slavery was unknown. The abolition of slavery was backed up in the Arthaśāstra by the withdrawal of the immunity of the Brāhmaṇ from criminal penalty and capital punishment. The Maurya empire sought to establish, in other words, the equality of all free citizens or Āryas before the law irrespective of caste of birth. This principle was underlined by Aśoka in his edicts which insist on all his officers to rigidly conform to the principles of daṇḍa-samatā (equality of punishment) and vyavahāra-samatā (equality in law-suits). The Mauryan empire for the first time in Indian history gave a political connotation to the status of the "Ārya", no longer restricted by the sacramental incidences of the Dvija, but embracing all the free citizens of an entire continent. "All Indians are free, and not one of them is a slave," observes Arrian. It was no doubt the earliest great movement of emancipation of the slaves, dāsas and bhaṭikas, who probably became very numerous as the Jātakas testify, and of the equality of all classes, Kshatriyas, Brāhmaṇs, Vāiśyas and Śūdras before the law. Death by drowning is to be meted out even to the Brāhmaṇs guilty of treason, says the Arthaśāstra. Thus did India first obtain from the Imperial Mauryas the conception of "Ārya"-nation. The endeavours of a firm and judicial administration under Mahāmātras and Rājūkas supervised by itinerant judges, establishing uniformity and equality of legal and other rights and punishment, also contributed to cement the bonds between the different classes and castes in a secular state. The Empire was also based on a wide-minded toleration of the manners, customs and laws not only of the aboriginal and forest peoples (āṭavikas) but also of the conquered peoples and foreign residents. The Arthaśāstra especially recommends that the king should even adopt the manners, language and dress of the conquered and respect their gods, social institutions and festivals. Every community, caste, corporation or village was left in complete freedom to pursue its own culture and mode of living peacefully according to the universal code of

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Dharma or Law—the Varṇāśrama regulations that govern the conduct and goals of life of the Āryas. These trends were no doubt in consonance with the heterogenous social composition of a vast empire with the Pārasikas, Yavanas and other foreigners inhabiting the north-west, and the zeal of people in a cosmopolitan age to take their due share in the expanding vocations, trade and commerce of the country irrespective of birth and caste regulations. That Ārya secularisation fast advanced in Maurya India is indicated by the Brāhmaṇs taking to all sorts of occupations: commerce, trade and agriculture, "living with the wealth and pomp of kings", and exploiting to the full the dāsa-bhaṭaka classes. The secular Brāhmaṇs used to receive Brahmadeya gifts of land and cultivated them by means of slave and hired labour. They also took to trade from which they accumulated considerable wealth. A Brāhmaṇa in one of the Jātakas is mentioned as sailing to Suvarṇabhūmi with merchandise, and slaves and workers. If he could not maintain himself he became a cattle-breeder, hunter or trapper dwelling in a border village or outside the city gate. The Jātakas indeed frequently mentioned the Brāhmaṇs engaged in agriculture; those who are impecunious adopt any calling, become bhaṭakas, cowherds and goatherds on hire or even become beggars. Though in both Buddhist and Jain literature the Brāhmaṇs are generally regarded as inferior in status to the Kshatriyas it was in Maurya India that they were first acquiring considerable wealth and prestige (Mahāsāla Brahman) through enjoyment of revenues of whole groups of villages ("yielding a hundred thousand") assigned to them by the kings, through the acquisition and cultivation of large estates worked by as many as 500 ploughs by means of slave and hired labour, and through trade, both inland and foreign. In the Jātakas we find mention of the Brāhmaṇ not merely as the king's purohita influencing politics, legislation and administration but also as his treasurer. Thus the Brāhmaṇs were already rising into prominence that changed into ascendency in the later centuries when the Kshatriya varṇa suffered final and complete eclipse in its long fateful struggle with the sturdier Indo-Greeks, Indo-Scythians, Indo-Parthians and Kushans.

Social Contrasts Between the Millionaires and the Outcastes

The Vāiśyas acquired considerable riches in the Maurya period both by trade and by management of big estates and

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cattle ranches that they acquired. Many of them became rich millionaires in the big cities of Northern India, where aśītikoṭi-vibhava seṭṭhis or multi-millionaires, of whom Anāthapiṇḍika the maha-seṭṭhi is a shining example, are mentioned, held in esteem by kings, nobles and peoples of villages and cities. Often these multi-millionaires became financial advisers of the state. The office, called seṭṭhitā, probably the alderman of a city like Banaras, Rājagṛha and Śrāvasti, was filled by the king according to the Mahavaṁśa. It is also noteworthy that it was the generosity of these seṭṭhis and gahapatis that was largely responsible for the support of the Buddhist Saṅgha by gifts of parks and gardens and construction of chaityas and stūpas. Both the Kshatriyas and the Vaiśyas were organised into military or economic guilds. The military guilds looked after the profession of arms as means of livelihood, while the economic guilds of artisans, traders and merchants devoted themselves to various economic pursuits and used to form larger unions or confederations under guild chiefs. There were industrial jeṭṭhakas and trading seṭṭhis, who rose to great power and eminence in Maurya India; they came in close relation to the state and participated in the civic administration. The head of the mercantile community, one of "the seven jewels of the state," was called gahapatiratna or seṭṭhi—the state treasurer and banker.

Below the Vaiśyas (Ibhyas) were the Śūdras, comprising the bulk of the people who lived by toil and were engaged in the various handicrafts or as slaves, servants and hired workers. Below the Śūdras in Mauryan India were the low tribes or castes (hīnajātīya) and the low craftsmen (hīnasippīya). The former comprised the five groups, viz, the Chaṇḍālas, the Pukkusas, the Nishadas, the Veṇas, the Rathakāras. There were aboriginal peoples who had not been assimilated to the social organisation and regarded as beyond the pale of society. They lived outside the village gates and were described as "ill favoured, unsightly and misshappen". In the Pāli texts the Chaṇḍāla is the least and lowest in society. To eat the remains of his food is an unpardonable sin for a Brāhmaṇ. Even the sight of a Chaṇḍāla is impure and requires washing the eyes with perfumed water. A Chaṇḍāla is belaboured because of standing at the city-gate, where the merchant's daughter encounters him while going out of the city.

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But this does not prevent the same merchant's daughter to become ultimately his wife. The hīna-sippani or degraded callings included the butchers, barbers, potters, weavers and leather-workers who were not regarded as outcastes. The outcastes who would pollute utensils that could not be used by others were called "nirvāsitas" by the famous grammarian Pāṇini, who pointed out that the plural forms varied according to the social status of the caste. Such castes as the blacksmiths, carpenters, weavers, milk-men, washermen etc., who are anirvāsitas, according to Pāṇini, were indicated by the dual number as contrasted with the plural affix for the nirvāsitas or the excommunicated ones such as the Chaṇḍālas and Mritapas (Pukkusas) although even these were included among the Śūdras. Patañjali includes the Śakas and the Yavanas in the category of anirvāsitas. There was, however, no hard and fast distinction between these "low" trades and callings, for persons could follow one or other calling. Thus a Jātaka story mentions a Kshatriya in love working successfully as a potter, basket-maker, reed-worker, garland-maker and cook.

Maurya Social Stratification

The Pālī literature draws its materials largely from half-Aryanised Magadha and Aṅga where social gradation is much more flexible, where the Brāhmaṇs have already begun to challenge the Kshatriya supremacy, where the rich seṭṭhis and kuṭumbikas coming from the Vaiśya community assail the supremacy of both the upper castes, and where the various artisans and functional classes occupy an intermediate position in economic condition and social status rising in the rungs of the social ladder or going down according to circumstances. The four varṇas comprising the Kshatriyas, Brāhmaṇs, Vaiśyas and Śūdras; the eighteen organised crafts or guilds (aṭṭhāraso seniyo) comprising masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, silver-smiths, painters, stone-dressers, leather-dressers and "men skilled in all arts and crafts" (Jātaka, vi, 427); the five hīna-sippanis, or unorganised, despised crafts followed by the half-Āryan, half-aboriginal groups, comprising the basket makers, cobblers, potters, weavers and butchers that do not yet seem to have been crystallised into castes or jātis (as contrasted with sippas or crafts in this period covering part of the 5th century B. C.—the date of the Vinaypiṭaka);

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and the five hīna-jātis comprising the aboriginal Chaṇḍālas (scavengers and hunters), Pukkusas (flower-gatherers), Nishādas (hunters or trappers), Veṇas (bamboo-workers) and Rathakāras (wheel-wrights) outside the pale of society, (Vinaya, IV, 6–10): such was the scheme of social gradation. The Chaṇḍālas, Pukkusas and Nishādas were low ethnic groups, while the Veṇas and Rathakāras were low, functional (artisan) groups integrated into the hīna-jātis. Up to at least the 5th century B. C. there were much interchange of occupations and no water-tight boundaries between the four varṇas (Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras) and the eighteen guilds which, as frequently mentioned in the Jātakas, the king or the Great Being assembled or took with him to the neglect of the other social orders. In the upper rungs of the social order no caste formation was discernible in the Maurya period. It was in the lowest rungs among the five hīnajātis that we find in the 5th century B. C. the beginning of the fateful transformation of both ethnic and functional groups into closed castes or jātis that ultimately spread to all parts of the social structure. Āpasthamba refers to the Nishāda, Chāḍḍāla, Paulkāsa and Vaina as the lowest castes (II, 1, 2, 6). Finally, in the Maurya period miscegenation was not uncommon leading to the rise of certain mixed castes (antarāla) the offspring of pratiloma marriage were especially looked down upon; such were the Ayogava, Kshattā and Chaṇḍāla (of Śūdra father); Māgadha and Vāidehika (of Vaiśya father), and Sūta (of Kshatriya father). The social contrast between the highest and the lowest strata is best indicated in the Majjhima-Nikāya: "A fool should he become a human being after the lapse of a very long time, he comes into one of the low stocks—Chaṇḍālas, Nishādas, Veṇas, Rathakāras and Pukkusas, he is reborn to a life or vagrancy, want and penury, scarce getting food and drink for his stomach or clothes to his back. A wise man, should he become a human being after the lapse of a very long time, he comes into one of the high stocks, Kshatriyas, Brāhmaṇs or Gahapatis, he is reborn to a life of affluence, riches and wealth with abundance of gold and silver coins, and with abounding substance and abounding possessions".

Corporate Village Life

Such briefly is the social picture of pre-Mauryan and Mauryan India. Maurya imperial administration rested on

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the grāma as the smallest unit under an officer called grāmaṇi, also, called the grāmika and grāma-bhojaka, and on groups of 10, 20, 100 and 1000 villages under officers called respectively Daśī, Viṁśī, Śateśa and Sahaseśa, in an ascending order of authority, culminating in Sthānikas Rājukas and Prādeśikas, charged with the welfare of Janapadas or country-parts and Prādeśas or districts. It appears that under Mauryan imperialism the autonomy of the villages was not eclipsed, the grāmika being not a salaried official but elected by the villagers. The agrarian system is represented by small farms worked by peasant proprietors who paid to the state one eighth, one sixth or one fourth of the produce (bhāga) according to a cadastral survey of which there is definite evidence in the Jātakas and Megasthenes. One sixth is the normal proportion besides bali that seems to have been an additional levy. Big estates are also met with, owned by landlords-cum-money-lenders (Mahāsālas, Kuṭumbikas or Gahapatis) who employed large numbers of slaves and agricultural labourers. The state owned all the virgin or unoccupied lands and forests, while the village owned the pastures and groves, irrigation tanks and canals. The village was the arena of an exuberant variety of collective enterprises, economic, social, educational and humanitarian, in Maurya India. There is distinct evidence of much enrichment and variegation of the corporate village life as found in the Vedic period. The villagers, we read in one of the Jātakas, "stood in the middle of the village transacting its business", improved its highways and roads, "built cause ways, dug water tanks, built a hall; they showed charity and kept the commandments". The public hall or Saṅthāgara of the village is the focus of all its activities. A village has its public hall, its sports ground, a court of justice (vinichhayam), assembly of religious discourse (dhammasabhām), beautiful pictures, and a tank with 1000 bends in the bank and 100 bathing ghats and an alms house (dānabhattam), we are told in the Mahāummagga Jātaka. Some references in the Arthaśāstra and the Jātakas suggest collective farming not to speak of collective management of irrigation, pasturage, grazing, education, recreations, charities and sacrifices.

In the Arthaśāstra we find that the ancient grāmaṇī or or grāmika was superseded by the gāmabhojaka or gāmasāmiko

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who enjoyed the revenues of the land and styled himself the village lord. He made a lot of money out of the fines imposed on the villagers for intemperance, murder or any other offence and took bribes in dealing with village disputes. He was subordinate to the gopas, sthānikas and still higher officers of the administration. In the pre-Mauryan period the village grāmika was entrusted with the collection of village revenues and adjudicated rural disputes. His power and status are amply evidenced by the fact recorded in the Mahāvagga of the Vinayapiṭaka that the grāmikas of Bindusāra (the successor of Chandragupta), 80,000 in number, used to be summoned in a great assembly. Village self-government suffered an eclipse due to the Mauryan policy of centralisation. As the Mauryan empire enlarged itself, provincial viceroys were appointed at Ujjain, Taxila and Tosali (Dhaulī) who were assisted by a number of high officers called mahāmātras. Metropolitan administration of the imperial and viceregal capitals was conducted by a commission of thirty members that constituted six boards of five members each. Small boards supervised the imperial departments in Pāṭaliputra viz., the mechanical arts, foreign residents, registration of births and deaths, sales, exchanges and weights and measures. Justice was administered by three judges with the assistance of Brāhmaṇ legists, and by village elders, guilds and caste-bodies. Mauryan imperialism showed a good deal of state control and management from city planning and colonisation of virgin lands to the management of crown lands, forests, industries and import and export trade. Even modern India can have important lessons for her planning and nationalisation schemes from Mauryan administration. The state had a central granary at headquarters as a reserve against famines and droughts, and a monopoly of the mining enterprise. It regulated wages, including agricultural wages, and also the relations between work and remuneration fairly and squarely. Kauṭilya gives a list of eighteen chief officers of the imperial administration (Adhyakshas).

Expansion of Foreign Trade and Intercourse

The extension of empire and peace in the country led to a phenomenal expansion of inland and foreign trade. For the first time India had developed a strong naval force (nausenā),

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guarding the vast coastal regions of India and giving adequate protection to the merchantmen on the high seas against piracy and attack on vessels importing pearls and jewels from the Tamil states and Ceylon to Northern India. For the proper supervision and control of the navy there was actually a Board of Admiralty at Pāṭaliputra as mentioned by Megasthenes. Ships, "full-rigged for distant seas" carrying "hundreds" of passengers and traders, coasted round India for distant Bharukachcha (Baroach) and Suvannabhūmi (Sumatra or generally the East Indies) touching Taprobane (Ceylon) on the way. There is a well-known passage in the Milindapañho (about first century A. D.) "As a shipowner, who has become wealthy by constantly levying freight in some seaport town, will be able to traverse the high seas, and go to Vaṅga (Bengal), Takkola (Malay), China, Sovira (Gujarāt), Suraṭṭha (Kāthiāwār), Alasanda (Alexandria), Kolapattana (Coromandel coast) and Suvannabhūmi (Burma) or any other place where ships do congregate". There is mention also of a trading journey to Baveru or Babylon. The great ports of the Mauryan empire were Bharukachcha (in the kingdom of Bharu) on the Narbadā, Śūrpāraka, Roruka (the capital of Sovira) and Karambiya in the West and Tāmralipti in Vaṅga whence sailed out traders for the East Indies and Ceylon and for Indian coastal trade.

All these ports were reached by magnificent inland road systems from Pāṭalīputra through Benares, Kauśāmbi, Bhārhut, Vidiśa and Ujjain, crossing the great forest-belt of Middle India (Kātyāyana's Kāntārapatha), to Pratishṭhāna and Bharukachcha or again, from Pāṭalīputra via Champā on the Ganges to Tāmralipti (modern Tamluk) or through Nālandā, Rājagriha and Bodh-Gaya by land to the same port; again from Tāmralipti through Bodh-gayā, Benares, Prayāga, Kauśāmbī, Mathurā, Hastināpura, Śākala, Taxila, and Pushkalāvatī to Kāpiśī and Bālhīka (Balkh, Pāṇini's Uttarapatha) whence Indian goods were carried down the Oxus to Europe by way of the Caspian and the Black Sea. There was also a difficult route from Śrāvastī through Kāmpilya and Mathurā and across the deserts of Rājpūtānā to Barbara or Paṭala on the Indus, whence Indian merchandise was carried by the ancient land route to Iran and the Greek cities of Asia Minor. Pāṇini refers to Madra-vāṇijya, Kāshmīra-vāṇijya and Gandhāra-vāṇijya indicating the importance of trade with

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these distant regions. In the great marts of Pāṭaliputra, Vaiśalī, Champā, Benares, Kauśāmbī, Sāketa (Ayodhya), Śrāvastī, Mathurā and Taxila were assembled goods from all parts of the civilized world. Rhys Davids observes: "Silks, muslins, the finer sorts of cloth and cutlery and armour, brocades, embroideries and rugs, perfumes and drugs, ivory and ivory work, jewellery and gold (seldom silver), these were the main articles in which the merchants dealt". Pearls, gems and sandal wood from the South were sold in the marts of Northern India and Western and Central Asia. Caravans going on the Iran and Gandhāra routes across sand dunes and deserts were steered in the coolness of nights by the stars under the land-pilotor. Thalaniyyāmaka, and the captain or Sātthavāha. The following would represent the important centres of the textile industry as recorded in the Arthaśāstra and the Jātakas: Silk-weaving, Benares, Vanga, Pundra, and Suvarnakudda; cotton, the finest stuff from Benares and Bengal, also Madurā (in the south), Aparānta, (Western India) Kaliṅga, Vatsa (Kaúsāmbī) and Mahishā (Māhishmatī); blankets, Gāndharā, Uḍḍiyāna, Nepal, and Vaṅga; Fibres, Puṇḍra (Northern Bengal), Suvarṇakudda, Magadha and Bālhīka.

The extensive Mauryan empire and commerce established close contacts between India and Western Asia and Europe on one side, and China, on the other. The house of Seleukos sent the ambassador Megasthenes in the reign of Chandragupta and Deimachos in the reign of Bindusāra to the court of Pāṭaliputra. Ptolemy Philadelphos of Egypt also sent an envoy named Dionysios to Pāṭaliputra. The Mauryan emperors in their turn sent envoys and messengers (dūtas) to distant foreign countries. Aśoka sent his dūtas or envoys for the preaching of his Dharma to the distant states of Antiochos Theos of Syria, and of the four kings, Ptolemy Philadelphos of Egypt, Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene and Alexander of Epirus. A whole host of Yavana and Persian officials found employment in the various provinces of India. In the reign of Aśoka a Yavana chief was given the charge of an important province and the execution of important irrigation works. The influx of foreign traders, merchants and officials led to the creation of a separate Board of Imperial Administration to deal with the interests of foreigners, as mentioned by Megasthenes. The presence of

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Iranians and Greeks in the Indus provinces led to the introduction of new scripts, viz., Aramaic, Kharoshṭī and the Yavanānī lipi (alphabet) of Pāṇini. On the Kabul river there was an actual Greek colony identified by some historians with the city-state of Nysa. Later on as the Mauryan empire declined in strength, Greek colonists and adventurers carved out independent states in the north-west and pushed into the Ganges Valley even as far east as Pāṭaliputra. The Iranian influence on Indian art and culture was naturally greater than the Greek influence. It is suggested that the architecture of the Imperial Mauryas bears Iranian impress. It is from Iran that Aśoka is said to have borrowed his sermons in stone, the similarity in tone to that of the valedictory address of Darius at Naksh-i-Rustam being obvious. The idea of excavating rock-hewn vihāras, it is also pointed out, is borrowed from the tombs of the Achæmenian kings. The bell-capitals of Asoka's column, which Havell considers, however, as derived from Indian inverted lotuses, may be due to Perso-Hellenic influence. The colossal animal motifs, such as the lion and the bull, the winged and the fabulous animals, as well as the palm tree that we come across in Bharhut and Sanchi bear the impress of Assyrian and Babylonian art patterns, assimilated as these have been in the background of Indian religion to the decorative motifs of folk symbolism in Śunga art. While the extent of Iranian influence is difficult to appraise, there is no doubt that Mauryan art and craftsmanship fully absorbed whatever they borrowed, and reached a standard of excellence unparalleled in the ancient world, except perhaps in Greece. Indian soldiers, no doubt formed units of the Persian army and fought against the Greeks in the fifth century B. C. But India's messengers of peace and goodwill, the dūtas of Aśoka who were sent to the Western Hellenistic states in addition to those sent on purely political business, had on the whole left indelible marks on phases of Greek philosophy, Gnosticism and other Christian doctrines. There seemed to have been established also a number of medical and philanthropic institutions for the aid of both man and animal by Aśoka's foreign missions, which were little bits of India planted in the West just as Alexander wanted to set little bits of Hellas down in Western Asia and India. Not only did the Mauryan Empire include for the first time Āryāvarta and

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Dakshiṇāpatha but also the entire plateau of Kābul, Herāt, Kandahār and Balūchistān in the vulnerable north-western borderland of India up to the boundaries of the sister Selucid Empire of Syria. India was given for the first time a political and cultural entity that was symbolised by the Maurya imperial conceptions of Ārya nationhood and citizenship (Āryabhāva), vital and vigorous enough to be transplanted in the colonies and settlements beyond the Pamirs that came to be designated as "Ārya", and in the course of a century of unprecedented peace and toleration, by the organised Dharma-vijaya missions to Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Indonesia, Nepal, Gāndhāra, Central Asia and the Hellenistic West. These gave a broad, humanistic Ārya interpretation to the monastic creed of the Buddha in conformity to the secular ideal and requirements of an extensive empire, and were some of the most successful and far-reaching civilizing adventures in the history of mankind. In Buddhist literature the treasures of a Chakravartin comprise a wheel, elephant, horse, jewel, queen, treasurer and minister. These are represented in a relief at Jaggyyapeta, 2nd century B. C. The Aśokan wheel on the Sārnāth lion capital symbolises at once the universal temporal sovereignty of the Mauryan Chakravartin monarch, whose chariot traverses the entire earth up to the ocean, and the spiritual sovereignty of Dharmāśoka, who emulates the example of the mythical Dalhanemi and Mahā-sudaśśana ruling the four quarters of the earth in righteousness for the welfare of men, beasts and birds. The cakra or chariot is the ancient Vedic symbol of universal empire that Buddhist art and religion utilised. The Anguttara Nikāya observes, "A cakkavatti is a just and pious sovereign in dependence on Dhamma". "His cakka cannot be set back by any human foe whatsoever". Under Aśoka the cakka becomes an appropriate symbol of toleration, secularism and universalism of Mauryan Empire as it is an eloquent testimony to the sensitiveness and majesty of Mauryan art.

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CHAPTER IX

THE TRIUMPH OF PACIFISM: THE HUMANITARIAN MISSION OF AŚOKA, BELOVED OF GODS

The Humane Policy of Aśoka the Righteous

A religion is judged by the personalities it creates and moulds. In the entire annals of kingship in the world there is no parallel of an emperor-cum-bhāgavata like Aśoka, who anticipated by twenty two centuries the modern dreams of world peace and righteousness and of supersession of the war-drum (bheri) by the reverberation of the law (dharma-bheri). On the other hand, Buddha's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Gaya would have meant merely the introduction of a new unpopular religious heresy in Hinduism, a local creed perhaps confined to the middle Ganges Valley, but for "Dhammarāja" Aśoka's missionary zeal and patronage (dharma kāmatā) that shaped it into a world religion. The remarkable feature in the career of Aśoka, the "beloved of gods", is that he was converted by Buddhism from a fractricide, the murderer of ninety nine brothers for the sake of the throne, a veritable Aśoka the Terrible (Chaṇḍāśoka) into Aśoka the Righteous (Dharmāśoka). That is the Mahāvamśa legend. But history records that the massacre in the Kalinga war by which Aśoka extended the boundaries of the Mauryan empire to include the whole of non-Tamil India led to his momentous moral transformation. As his own Edict says: "Directly after the conquest of the Kalingas, the Beloved of gods became keen in the pursuit of Dharma, love of Dharma, and inculcation of Dharma. The chiefest conquest is not that by arms but by Dharma (dharma-vijaya)". Soon after the Kalinga war Aśoka became a lay disciple or upāsaka of the Buddhist fraternity and went out on "pious tours" (Dharma-yātrā) to Bodhgayā and came to be familiar with the way of living of monks in the Buddhist Saṅgha. On the gates of Sāñchī we find depicted the pilgrimages of Aśoka with two of his queens to the Isipatana Mṛigadāva and also to the Bo-tree at Gayā, and a magnificent fresco in the Bagh caves also probably depicts the Emperor,

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seated on a mighty tusker and moving in a procession as if returning from a victorious campaign and espying Buddhist Bhikkus on the crowded roadside. May not this represent the episode of Aśoka's conversion that was so critical for both his personal life and the history of Buddhism? Another scene in the fresco represents the Emperor in solemn consultation with his ministers and courtiers, while at a distance the queen weeps and is being consoled by her attendant. On the roof the cooing pigeons bespeak tranquility. Aśoka seems to have spent 256 nights on his pilgrimage and completely changed over into Buddhist life and habits.

With this transformation Aśoka ordered that in the capital of Pāṭaliputra, "no animal should be slaughtered for sacrifice, nor shall any merry-making be held, because in merry-making is seen much that is objectionable". (Rock Edict I). He forbade the massacre of living creatures to make curries in the Imperial kitchen. He discontinued the royal hunts, prohibited the slaughter of all four-footed animals which are neither utilised nor eaten, such as cattle, the killing of fish for certain days, the branding of horse and cattle and "the castration of bulls, he-goats, rams, boars and other animals". Aśoka also made arrangement for the procurement of medical herbs, roots and fruits, curative or wholesome for man and beast, by importing from other countries and "plantation in all places wherever they did not exist". The Emperor says in Pillar Edict VII, "On the high roads, too, banyan trees were caused to be planted by me that they might give shade to cattle and men, mango-gardens were caused to be planted, and wells were caused to be dug by me at each half-kos, rest-houses were caused to be built; many watering stations were caused to be established by me, here and there, for the comfort of cattle and men. Slight comfort, indeed is this. For by various kinds of facilities for comforts, the people have been made happy by previous kings, and myself. But, that the people might strictly follow the path laid down by Dharma, was this done by me". In the Saṁyutta-Nikāya we find the significant observation that

> "Folks from earth to heaven go who are:
> Planters of groves and fruitful trees,
> And they who build causeway and dam,
> And wells construct and watering-sheds
> And (to the homeless) shelter give".

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The Combination of Righteousness with Statesmanship

The same humane policy was extended by Aśoka to barbarous forest folks (āṭavikas) to whom the beneficent message went forth, indelibly impressed on rock and pillar in the outlying forested part of the empire. "Even upon the forest folk in his dominion His sacred majesty looks kindly and seeks to win over to his way of life and thought. It is said unto them how even in his repentence is the might of His sacred majesty, so that they may be ashamed (of their crimes) and may not be killed. Indeed His sacred majesty desires towards all living beings freedom from harm. restraint of passions, impartiality and cheerfulness". In Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra we also find that the foresters (aṭavyas) were placed under the administration of special officers called the Aṭavīpālas. Neighbouring states, friendly or inimical were given the assurance on behalf of the Emperor and for his sons and great-grandsons that the Dharma will be followed. "The chiefest conquest is that achieved by Dharma and not by brute force". Again "the conquest that by this is won everywhere, that conquest, again, everywhere is productive of a feeling of love. Love is won in moral conquest. That love may be indeed, slight, but His sacred majesty considers it productive of great fruit, indeed, in the world beyond. For this purpose has this religious edict been indited that my sons and great-grandsons that may be, should not think that a new conquest ought to be made; but that if a conquest is theirs (or pleases them), they should relish forbearance and mildness of punishment, and they should consider that only as conquest which is moral conquest". Thus did the grandson of one of the greatest conquerors of India replace the old conquest of arms by the conquest of righteousness, and succeeding generations remembered with gratitude Aśoka as Dharmāśoka-narādhipa, "righteous Aśoka, the ruler of men".

Such was the spiritual transformation in Aśoka's household that both his son Mahendra, and his daughter Sanghamitrā forsook the world and entered the Buddhist Sangha as members. On the request of King Tissa of Ceylon Aśoka sent a mission to Ceylon under his son, Mahendra and Sumana, the son of Sanghamitrā (about 250 B.C.). On a second request he sent his daughter Sanghamitrā with a branch of the sacred Bodhi-tree which was

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despatched to Tāmralipti harbour under the escort of an army led by Aśoka. Aśoka himself carried the branch on his head and took it to the ship in breast-deep water. The branch of the Bodhi-tree was then carried to Ceylon. The Buddhist stūpa at Sāñcī shows in two reliefs the carrying of the bo-tree from Uruvela to Ceylon. There is also a fresco at Ajanta depicting this episode of the ascetic pair taking the Way of the Dhamma to Ceylon. The entry of Buddhism into Ceylon was also the entry of civilization. India gave to Ceylon not only religion but also her irrigation system and the arts of sculpture and architecture, and the island still worships with gratitude and reverence the gentle ascetic prince in a rock-hewn relief and tomb, not far from the ancient sacred city of Anuradhapura built by Tissa and his successors with its vast numbers of sanghārāms, parks, baths and palaces. Ceylonese chronicles also state that Aśoka's mission went to Suvarṇabhūmi, i.e., Burma and perhaps to the islands of the East Indies.

The Propagation of a Universal Moral Code

Aśoka's combination of statesmanship with righteousness is also abundantly evident from the manner of his preaching of Dharma. The Bhabru edict in Jaipur State definitely indicates Aśoka's predilection for, if not adherence to, the dhamma of Śākyamuni, since it refers to the seven discourses on the Dhamma to be constantly pondered over by the Bhikkhus and Upāsakas adding: "whatever is said by the Buddha, the gifted Master, is well said indeed; thus verily the good faith will be long enduring". For the propagation of the Buddhist doctrines Aśoka utilised the contemporary collection of the Buddha's discourses—the Dhammapariyāya. Some of his pillar edicts comprise a general injunction for the "unfrocking" of the schismatic monks and nuns of the Sangha. Such was his zeal in maintaining the purity of the Buddha's religion. According to the Divyāvadāna, the Emperor went on pilgrimage to such Buddhist holy places as the Lumbini Garden, Kapilavastu, Buddha-Gayā and Ṛishipattana (Sārnāth) establishing permanent monuments at these spots. Besides he also visited the site of Koṇakamana. Though he was a Buddha-bhāgavata, in intimate touch with the Buddhist Sangha, yet what Aśoka preached to the people is not any narrow creed of Buddhism but the Universal Dharma comprising the essence or sāra

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of all religions. He set forth the goals of neither nirvāṇa nor sambodhi but a universal code of duties and obligations following the ancient norm (porana pakiti). In a famous passage of the Saṁyutta Nikāya we read that the Buddha was no renovator but only traversed the eternal way, and only revived the primeval, omnipresent cosmic law. Dharma in Vedic literature is Rita or the cosmic binding order, the eternal truth holding its sway over the universe, in the words of the Arthaśāstra. Buddhism emphasised both the metaphysical and moral aspects of Dharma. Dharma analysis here is "the discernment of an eternal, orderly, conditioned sequence of things" in the words of the Suttapiṭaka. Dharma practice in Buddhism is the Law of Altruism, complete, balanced and practical, as embodied in the Eight-fold Āryan Path, and based on the laws of unity, continuity, metempsychosis and transience. Aśoka followed the footsteps of the Buddha in emphasising the ancient norm. He spoke of svarga as the goal for the common people and not of any nirvāṇic calm, and called himself the beloved of the devas or Hindu gods in order to bring his universal moral principles home to the great bulk of his Hindu subject population. Toleration is the key-word in the Dharma of the Aśokan edicts, grounded in "restraint from speaking well of one's own sect and ill of others". In Edict XII we read: "His sacred and gracious majesty the King does reverence to men of all sects whether ascetics or householders, by gifts and various forms of reverence. The man who praises his own particular form of religion and sneers at that of others, merely in order to enhance his own, in reality inflicts upon it the most grievous injury. Concord, then, is meritorious, to wit, hearkening willingly to the Law of Piety as accepted by other people". In a vast country, comprising people in various stages of culture and worshipping various gods and goddesses, Aśoka had the genius and acumen to realise that gifts or outward forms of respect are far less significant than the essentials of religion and the spirit of forbearance and toleration and that moral propagandism (dharma-vijaya) could only succeed on the basis of wide outlook (bahuka), and the interpretation of Dharma in its comprehensive sense acceptable to all the religions, Brahmanism, Jainism or Buddhism. Aśoka declared himself a friend of the devas, Brāhmaṇas and ascetics of different orders. Likewise the Aśokan edicts insist upon the recognition of the

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sanctity of animal life as the absolute duty of persons of all faiths and beliefs. This again was going back to the ancient norm. The Buddha devoted his whole life's preaching to wean Brāhmaṇism from the most elaborate and complex sacrifices involving violence towards living creatures. Frankly did the Rock Edict IX protest against empty ceremonialism. The Edict says: "People perform various ceremonies (mangalam). In troubles, marriages of sons and daughters, births of children, departures from home—on these and other (occasions) people perform many ceremonies. But in such (cases) mothers and wives perform numerous ceremonies, and diverse, petty and worthless ceremonies, Now ceremonies should certainly be performed. But these bear little fruit. That, however, is productive of great fruit which is connected with Dharma. Herein are these: proper treatment of slaves and workers (dāsa-bhatakari samya-patipati), reverence to teachers, restraint of violence towards living creatures, and liberality to Brāhmaṇ and Śramaṇa ascetics". This is the Dharma described in a nutshell.

Amelioration of the Condition of Slaves and Agricultural Labourers

In the Mauryan age the lot of the slaves (dāsas) and the agricultural labourers (bhataka, bhatika) became miserable though, it must be added, it was better than that of the Greek slaves. In the Jātakas we often read of slaves and slave girls being treated as members of the family, but also of slaves, male and female, being "beaten, chained, branded and fed in slave's rationing at the slightest fault", the conventional price of a slave being 100 kahāpaṇas. The Buddha exorted their humane treatment as recorded in the Sigālovāda Suttanta, which has already been quoted. In the Arthaśāstra, Kauṭilya mentions that it was a punishable offence to defraud a slave of his property, and privileges, and to hurt, abuse or wrongfully employ him, and there were also regulations according to which a slave could become free by payment of ransom. It was one of the duties of the king to correct those who neglected their duty towards slaves. In fact Kauṭilya was on the whole bent towards the manumission or abolition of slave labour as a matter of economic policy. He also indicates the following measures of protection of day labourers or hirelings (karmakāras, bhṛtakas). Wages should be

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determined by the nature of the work and the time taken in doing it according to agreement between the employer and the worker which should be made known to neighbours. Non-payment of such wages is punished by fines. The bhaṭaka or bhaṭikaraka is entitled to his wages (vetana) and also to concessions if he is disabled (aśaktah), assigned to dirty job (kutsita karma) or is ill and distressed. Aśoka's insistence upon the proper treatment of slaves and workers, that indeed closely follows the Buddha's injunction and Kauṭilya's or Āpastamba's liberal policy, was underlined by the multiplication of slaves and landless labourers, whose numbers were very large, and whose ranks were swelled by the peasant farmers giving up their holdings and the rise of the new rich owners of millions (eighty crores, asitikoṭivibhava) the kuṭumbikas, seṭṭhīs and gāmabhojakas, who began to acquire lands on a vast scale and worked them by means of slave and hired labour. As in Western Europe, prior to the Industrial Revolution, urban capitalism and agricultural finance entered into sinister combination and acquired interest in the land, bringing down the economic status of the workers who tilled the land for their masters for a morsel of rice or barley and a small cash. The hireling or day labourer became, indeed, a term of oppobrium; he was not entitled to the amenities that even slaves could enjoy. His diet is rice-ball (kummāsa-piṇḍa) or barley cooked in the manner of rice with little soup (appasūpam yavabhattaṃ) and he obtains "a māsaka or half-māsaka for wages in cash by which he can hardly support his mother". Elsewhere we read that a water-carrier who earns half-māsaka a day could also lay by something; he hides his saving in the brick joints of the rampart. The Arthaśāstra fixed wages at a paṇa (kahāpaṇa) and a quarter per mensem (16 māsakas equal to 1 kahāpaṇa; Kauṭilya uses the form paṇa) i.e., 20 māsakas per mensem or two-third māsaka per dium for slaves, agricultural labourers and field watchmen.

The lowest daily wages of a royal servant in the city of Pāṭalīputra according to Kauṭilya, is 1 kahāpaṇa (copper), while skilled workers obtain 2 kahāpaṇas per diem. (Manu's rate is also 1 paṇa or 16 māsakas for the unskilled workers together with 1 drona or 4 ādhakas of rice once a month and clothes after six months). The disparity in the standard of living between the Ārya and the Avara or low-caste workers is definitely indicated

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by Kauṭilya as follows: "One prastha of rice, pure and unsplit, one-fourth part of sūpa, and clarified butter or oil equal to one-fourth part of sūpa will suffice to form one meal of an Ārya. One-sixth prastha of sūpa for a man, and half the above quantity of ghee will form one meal for a man of low caste (avara) or dāsa. Three-fourths of the same ration will be the food of women; and half of that will be for children". In the Vinaya we find that one copper kahāpaṇa can buy enough quantities of meat and green grocery for a single person, and a small quantity of ghee or oil can be had for that sum. One kahāpaṇa buys coarse chīvaras for monks and nuns according to the Jātakas. One half to one māsaka is the day labourer's wage, frequently mentioned in the Jātakas while Kauṭilya fixed 2/3 māsaka as the wage for the agricultural worker. As regards his luxuries a water-carrier and his wife, it is mentioned in one of the Jātakas, pool their saving together with one māsaka and want to have a spree, "buy a garland with one part of it, perfume with another and a strong drink with a third".

If parrots ravage a rice field that is being watched by the field labourer, "the Brāhmaṇa will have a price put on the rice and debit it from his (wages) account". When wages are not previously fixed a tiller of the soil obtains 1/10th of the crop grown, a herdsman 1/10th of the butter clarified and a pedlar 1/10th of the sale proceeds, according to the Arthaśāstra. In the Milinda-pañho the bhatikas are assigned the lowest status among the workers, even lower than that of the slaves (dāsaputtas). It is no wonder then that the Aśokan code of morality emphasises as much the sacredness of the lower animal life as just and humane relations between employer and worker, and the abolition of exploitation in any form which is the real meaning of Dharma. In one edict he indeed refers to his various kindnesses and good deeds and observes, "To man his highest gift has been the gift of Dharma (dharma-dānam) and of spiritual insight, while to the lower animal world it was the gift of life (prāṇa-dakshiṇā)".

The New Liberal Humanism

An emperor, whose palace is converted into a vihāra and whose children have taken to the homeless life, and yet who holds charge of one of the biggest kingdoms of the world in his time, introduces Dharma into every sphere of life—dharma in his

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dealings with the have-nots, the slaves, the working folk, the criminal tribes and the forest peoples and dharma also in relations with other states and peoples, big or small, near or distant. Thus does Dharmāśoka sum up his enduring message by saying that he wants the aims and happiness of the people to be regulated by Dharma, and the people also to grow day by day in their reliance upon Dharma and their ardour for Dharma. The external regulation of Dharma through precepts and prohibitions is, however, he concludes, far less efficacious than the inner regulation through meditation and spiritual insight. In the last years of his reign Dharmāśoka appears to have been more convinced than before about the need of inner illumination, thought-power (nijhatiyā) and will power (parākrama) of man. In this Aśoka goes back to the ancient Vedic wisdom, and justifies his title, Devānāṁpriya, the "beloved of the devas" of Hinduism. Aśoka lays claim to his dharma-vijaya over the kingdoms of his Ceylonese, South Indian and Hellenistic neighbours. There is no doubt that Buddhism spread in some measure, and Buddhist saṁghas and humanitarian institutions were planted in his reign in Western Asia. The Mahavaṁśa refers to the Buddhist missionary enterprise in the country of the Yonas, where the monk Mahārakkhita "delivered in the midst of the people the kāla Karama Suttanta". As the result of this 170,000 living creatures attained to the reward of the path, and 10,000 received the pabbajjā. Not only did Emperor Aśoka achieve the consolidation of a vast Indian Empire based on a unified Indian culture, but he also spread the message of universal peace and concord to the independent Dravidian countries of the South and to the Greek rulers of Asia. Aśoka was the first Indian monarch to place India on the map of the civilised world and bring to bear contemporary Western i.e., Hellenic-Achæmenian influences upon Indian art and culture. Aśoka was the first among India's great internationalists.

The reign of Aśoka, who by his Dharma-vijaya consolidated the largest empire founded in India, including territories in the centre, north and north-west and incorporating Gāndhāra and Kashmir and the Deccan as far south as Mysore, was dominated in every detail by the ideal and practice of Buddhism, interpreted not as a narrow state region but as a liberal, humanistic creed. Aśoka's stress of a universal code of Dharma was entirely

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congruent with the needs of the highly centralised administration of a vast empire, of the expanding trade and commerce and of the social levelling associated with the assimilation of non-Āryan peoples, the decline of Brahmanical ascendancy and the meeting together of the Persian, Central Asian and Indian races in the Mauryan Age. Such diffusion of universal morality, as contrasted with "the diverse, petty and worthless rites and ceremonies in popular vogue, especially among the women-folk" as well as animal sacrifices which Aśoka unequivocally condemned, had almost the sanction of the law of the Mauryan state behind it. Within two centuries that elapsed between the death of the Buddha and the conversion of Aśoka, a humane religion became the faith and practice of the people, spreading goodwill and compassion to animals, to slaves, agricultural labourers and the have-nots, to the savage tribes of the forests and to big and small neighbouring states so that there were security and justice all round. In the flowing tide of a new liberal humanism it was not the Buddhist Nirvāṇa but the more ancient, tolerant universal code of duties and obligations (poraṇa pakiti) that the Mauryan emperor bestowed to the Indian common man through his numerous rock and pillar edicts.

The Piety and Serenity of the World's Earliest Religious Art

There was a tremendous release of popular feeling and imagination, expressing itself in the art and religion of the Mauryan period. Various gods and goddesses of rural India, such as Devatās, Yakshas and Yakshīs, Nāgās, Nāginīs, Gandharvas and fertility spirits, Kubera, guardian of the North and chief of the Yakshas, Virūpāksha, guardian of the West, Dhṛtarāshṭra, guardian of the East, Virūdhakha, guardian of the South, Sirima Devatā, goddess of fortune, Vṛkshakā, guardian of trees Sudarśanā, guardian of still waters, and Manasā, perhaps Earth-goddess or Mother-goddess, came to be included in the Buddhist pantheon. Some of these are depicted on the toraṇa-pillars and railings in Bhārhut, Sāñchī, Bodh-Gayā and Batanmara. At Sāṇchī we have also the figure of Gaja-Lakshmī. Earth, tree and water spirits are swaying, graceful and dynamic, but the following rhythm is circumscribed so that one feels that their energies do not overstep their limited abodes. On the other hand, the colossal Parkham, Besnagar and Dīdārganj Yakshas, dating from

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the 3rd century B.C., are magnificently executed, embodying a stupendous quantity of physical or earthly energy that is captured by the stone and seems to burst out of it. The popular Brahmanical gods and godlings, who found their way deliberately or unconsciously into the service of the new religion, suggest neither introspection nor faith; they are spirits of the earth, vegetation and water, and of a human or fairy world, not yet moralised or spiritualised. Soon it is not the cults of the soil, tree and water but the cult of Man that monopolises artistic feeling and enthusiasm, and Indian art enters its most significant, formative period, dealing with the theme of the lives and enlightenment of the Buddha in a grand epic and missionary and yet tender and intimate style.

Contrasted with the ancient Yakshas and Yakshīs, deities of physical energy and plentiness, are the numerous devout figures of kings, queens, nobles, merchants and common men and women which Buddhism invested with a new depth and radiance in the decorations of the Buddhist stūpa. The stūpa, ancient burial mound, built in honour of a hero or a saint, came to symbolise in early Buddhism the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha as the Wheel represented his first sermon, the goblins or courtesans before a tree the Temptation, the horse the Renunciation and the aśvattha tree the Great Enlightenment. The stūpa was the place of pilgrimage of thousands, enshrining as it did the relics of the Buddha and of his disciples and was encircled by a railed-in terrace for circumambulation. It was the four gateways at the four cardinal points and the railings, pillars and archways that gave the pious kings, noble merchants (gahapatis) and guilds of craftsmen and artists opportunities for display of beneficence, devotion and craftsmanship. The Sāṇchī, Bhārhut and Bodh-Gayā railings, gateways and balustrades are concerned with the Buddhist Jātaka stories, dealing with the common incidents of animal and human life with a new piety and devotion that completely transforms mundane existence. Reliefs showing the miraculous conception of Māyādevī and the descent of the White Elephant in the silent hour of the night, the miracles of the Buddha quenching the sacred fire and walking on the river, the gift of the Jetavana, the worship of the Buddha by the Nāga king, the Parinirvāṇa and the visit of Aśoka to the Stūpa of Rāmagrāma, are all pervaded by a passionate devotion to the Buddha,

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expressed in the easy flow of kneeling and bowing attitudes of persons or groups of persons, animals and trees integrated together in a well-balanced dynamic composition. The concentration of faith in a spiritual and unseen power articulates itself sometimes in a densely packed but balanced grouping, sometimes in quiet and elegant movements of a few sparsely modelled figures, well-fitted into the static serenity of the scenes. The earliest religious art of the world in the Maŭryan-Śuṅga reliefs is a triumph of serenity, introspection and devotion.

Equally significant in the art of Sāñchī and Bhārhut is the feeling of one-ness of all sentient life, which is the Buddha's precious gift to the Indian man. Elephants, lions, horses, deer and buffaloes participate in the achievements of the Buddha that are intended for all creation and depicted with great feeling or tenderness. Particularly sacred and superbly drawn are the large numbers of young elephants, horses and lions, the elephant symbolising the Nativity, the horse the Renunciation and the lion the Power and Majesty of Buddha-ship. Animal sculpture has shown a naturalistic vigour, freshness and innocence at their highest in India. As many as thirty Jātaka legends are illustrated at Bhārhut—folk stories and animal legends coming from the heart of the masses but now impregnated with a profoundly rich moral purpose and a sense of kinship of all life. In the entire range of development of Indian sculptures there are few works in stone that may be compared with those of Sāñchī depicting the adoration of the Buddha by the herd of wild elephants, the sermon in the Deer Park with its assemblage of anchorites and animals, or the Jātaka stories of the elephant and monkey Bodhisattva in their expression of tender feeling for the lower animal creation and for nature, born of Jain and Buddhist metaphysics. The Indian forest, saturated by the Jātaka feeling of infinite sympathy with all sentient beings, shines forth in the Sāñchī animal reliefs as the sacred mansion of the multi-born Bodhisattva. Not even Hellenic art of the classic period has treated animal and man, fruit, flower and foliage with such naturalistic delight, incisiveness and freedom.

The Symbols of Buddhist Iconography

It is true that Buddhism preached the total abnegation of desire and enjoyment and decried art and beauty. The Dāsa-

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Dhamma Sutta observes: "Beauty is nothing to me, neither the beauty of the body, nor that which comes of dress .... Sound, taste, smell, touch, these intoxicate human beings: cut off the yearning inherent in them". Buddhism forbade the delineation of the human form or expressing delight and even interest in it. But this was only a religious scruple and injunction. In artistic imagination even the foot-prints, tree, wheel, umbrella and the throne-motif could convey the Buddha's divinity and express the pent-up religious emotions that broke out of the solid mass of pillars and railings. Or the Buddha was not shown at all even by a concrete symbol, but a profound atmosphere of spirituality could be created by delicate and pious movements and gestures. In the narration of the Jetavana Jātaka story on the railing post both at Bhārhut and Bodh-Gayā, neither the Master nor any symbol, by which he is usually represented, appears. Yet the sacredness as well as the munificence of the millionaire's gifts are adequately expressed by the massive and well-balanced compositions and the rhythm of movement of the full-limbed figures and their animated poses. Symbols, like the foot-prints sometimes move about in the same relief, dramatically participating in the story-telling. Thus at Bhārhut Buddha's gradual descent from heaven is brought home to the devout crowd by marking with foot-prints the topmost as well as the lowermost rung of Heaven's ladder and the devices of the Bodhi-drum and the altar decorated with flowers. The combination of symbols reinforces the narration as well as the upsurge of religious feeling. It is characteristic that due to the taboo on the representation of the Buddha's image, and also perhaps to the innate love of the Indian craftsman of modelling animals the early religious art of India (about 2nd century B.C.) depicted the Buddha in his previous births in the forms of various animals following the Jātakas. It was somewhat later (about 1st century B.C.) that the four Great Miracles—Birth, Renunciation, Enlightenment and the first Teaching—Death and other great events of his earthly life came to be represented through the use of various symbols. The large variety of symbols, motifs and conventions, some of which are probably ancient symbols of "the Fertile Crescent", constituted, indeed, a most forceful vocabulary in Buddhist iconography. Often the plastic language also takes delight in depicting scenes of the common

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man's daily routine, of enjoyment and luxury, of kingly pomp and procession in prolific sensuousness, true to the Indian vision of human life and destiny as an integral part of a cosmic scheme, which is much older than the experience of enlightenment of the Buddha. As we see king Śuddhodana going out of Kapilavastu to meet his Parivrājaka son, Bimbisāra proceeding on a visit from the imperial capital to meet the Buddha, or Aśoka's pilgrimage to the stūpa of Rāmagrāma and the Bodhi tree at Gayā, we are also again and again reminded of the ancient Indian experience of the supremacy of Brahmanical wisdom and saintliness (Brahma-balaṁ) over Kshatriya power and majesty (Kshatriya-balaṁ). There were authentic historical scenes depicted at Sāñchī, full of ancient memories and pious associations.

The Folk and the Civic Art of Buddhism

The emphasis in Buddhism of the moral grandeur of man and his symbiosis with Nature and all sentient existence abolished the barrier between the earthly and the spiritual, overcame all restriction of expression by sheer exaltation of feeling and striving, and played the decisive role in the development of Indian art. The sculpture of Sāñchī is in particular spontaneously and exuberantly naturalistic and brimful of the joy of life that spills from the Foot-prints, the Wheel and the Tree of the Buddha, and enters into the pious disciple, the elephant, the deer, the monkey and the peacock of the Buddhist world, and finally into the fresh, voluptuous limbs of the Yakshī. The popular godling, with her heaving breasts, swaying like a mango-blossom under the canopy of the mango-tree, is spiritualised by the Buddhist kinship and affection towards the whole universe. So she swings at Sāñchī as the guardian of the gateway, forming a bracket to the architrave as thousands of Buddhist pilgrims pass under her, while circumambulating the stūpa. Thus is the Yakshī, a tutelary deity of popular faith and imagination, transformed by Sāñchī in the Mauryan age into the angelic, frolicksome guardian of the Buddha's Citadel. Both Bhārhut and Sāñchī represent a phase of Indian religious evolution in which the ancient widespread folk cults of Yakshas and Yakshīs, tutelary gods and godlings of forest and village life, of trees and serpents and of fertility spirits are not dismissed as irrelevant and superstitious,

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but have come under the ambit of, and been subordinated to the message of the Great Illumination. The Buddha under the Bodhi tree simply replaces the Vṛksha-devatā to whom the maid Sujātā used to bring daily her offering of milk-rice; and thus the Bhārhut and Sāñchī sculptors had no compunction in representing the various trees under which the Manushi-Buddhas sat for their enlightenment. The cult of trees and fertility spirits, handed down from the Indus valley culture to the common people, becomes the handmaid of the new philosophy.

Art aids the higher religion to absorb the gods and spirits not only of the older popular faiths, Yakshas, Nāgas, Vṛksha-devatās, Apsarās and Kinnaras but also such Brahmanical deities as Indra, Sūrya and Lakshmī, who are equally to be found in the reliefs of Bhārhut and Bodh-Gayā. All folk-gods and godlings remain as worshippers or guardians of the Buddha; while the troop of singing and dancing Apsarās and Gandharvas of Hinduism is not eschewed by art through puritanical zeal. From the viewpoint of artistic treatment, Bhārhut, Sāñchī, Mathurā, and Bodh-Gayā and the Chaitya-cave at Bhājā represent a tradition of symbolism and conventional iconography as well as a flowing linear rhythm and intuition of composition that matured later at Mathurā, Sārnāth, Amarāvatī, Ājantā and Ellorā. Nor were the skill, workmanship and technology in Mauryan sculpture less significant. The Aśokan columns, large monoliths of polished stone with their lion, bull, horse or elephant capitals, are marvels of workmanship, characterised by precision of modelling, stylistic finish and brilliant polish that have won the admiration of modern Western sculptors. It is probable that Aśoka did not originate the Aśokan columns inscribed with his edicts. For he says in one of his rock inscriptions: "Edicts are to be inscribed on rocks both here and in distant places. But wherever a stone pillar is standing they must be inscribed on that stone pillar." Aśoka's imperial palace at Pāṭalīputra elicited the wonder and awe of Hiuen-Tsang who observed that the colossal stones with their superb carving were the work of no mortal hands. The imperial metropolitan art of Aśoka, combining marvellous technical proficiency and refinement with systematic vigour and dignity in modelling, harnessed the universal principles of Dhamma and the more profane ideal of paramount Mauryan sovereignty for the establishment of a

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secular-cum-Dharmarājya throughout the length and breadth of the sub-continent and beyond. Not before Aśoka was art lifted to such noble moral purpose, nor was it utilised for such universal and expansive political and social aims. But the imperial sculptors at Sārnāth or elsewhere could not excel the sculptors of Bhārhut and Sāñchī in the modelling of the splendid young elephants, horses and lions, far more successful than the cold hieratic figures on the Aśokan pillars influenced by a Persepolitan art. The range and depth of Aśokan art fall far short of the generic Buddhist art of the Mauryan period as represented by Bhārhut, Sāñchī and Bodh-Gayā and the early Chaitya caves in Western India. These latter represent not a civic art, nor merely a religious art, but an art per se expressing the totality of contemporary human life and experience in India in its prolific realism and sensuousness.

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CHAPTER X

INDO-HELLENISM: YAVANA ELEMENTS IN INDIAN CULTURE AND ART

Causes of the Fall of the Maurya Empire

The Mauryan Empire fell soon after the death of Aśoka (230 B.C.). Disintegration began with one of Aśoka's sons making himself independent in the north-west. Kuṇāla and later on his sons were rulers of Pāṭaliputra and Ujjain. The disintegration of the Maurya Empire encouraged Antiochos the Great, (220-107 B.C.) to invade the Indus Valley. Subhāgasena, who was a ruler in the north-west, placated him with the gift of a number of elephants. According to one evidence the Greek King Demetrius pushed into the Ganges Valley as far as Pāṭaliputra.

The causes of the decline of the Maurya Empire are not far to seek. Buddhism and Jainism by their encouragement of the elite of the country to embrace the homeless life, no doubt, contributed towards lowering the quality of the racial stock and the standards of efficiency and morals in every field. Chāṇakya's attempt to revive the ancient principles of varṇāśrama and the obligations of marriage, family and society could not succeed against the tides of Asceticism, Jainism and Buddhism. As a reaction against the wide-spread monachism we find the luxury and indulgence of both the Kshatriya nobility and the rich Seṭṭhis and Kuṭumbikas. The vast wealth that flowed into the North Indian cities from the trade with the Golden Chersonese and Central and Western Asia, and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the princes, nobles and landholders (gahapatis), both Vaiśyas and Brāhmaṇs, as well as the opportunity for exploitation of large numbers of slaves and agricultural labourers (dāsa-bhaṭakas) had their demoralising influences.

Maurya administration was highly centralised and bureaucratic and grounded on state economic monopoly or control and a large variety of direct and indirect taxes, cesses and levies that must have proved a heavy burden on the population. In the

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Maurya empire there were oppressive taxes like kara, vishi or praṇaya, forms of forced labour or benevolences which could be imposed by oppressive Samāhartās from villages or by kings facing a depleted treasury. These levies and cesses, included in the list of rāshṭra revenue, were the opportunities for greedy and corrupt officials when imperial supervision became lax. "There are", says Kauṭilya, "about forty ways of embezzlement; what is realised later is entered later on; what is realised later is entered earlier; what ought to be realised is not realised". Neither the elaborate system of spies or detectives set up over ministers and officers of all grades, nor the regular tour of inspection by mahāmātras instituted by Aśoka for dealing with official corruption, could check the oppression of the people. The Divyāvadāna refers to the rebellion of Taxila where Kunāla who goes as Viceroy is told that the people are hostile neither to the Prince nor to Aśoka but cannot endure the oppression of the wicked ministers (Dushṭāmātyāh). In one of the Jātakas we read that the tax-gatherer (Niggahaka), ordered by the king, plunders the wealth like a robber without fear. A king raises fines, corvees, cattle taxes and cash levies and crushes his subjects like sugar-canes in a mill. One of the last Maurya emperors, Śāliśūka, is described as wicked, cruel and unrighteous; and what a wicked king may do is described by one of the Jātakas in the form of a prophecy: "he shall set the whole country folk to work for him; for the king's sake shall the oppressed people, leaving their own work, sow early and late crops, keep watch, reap, thresh and garner, plant sugarcanes, make and drive sugar mills, boil molasses, lay out gardens and orchards. And as they gather in all diverse kinds of produce to fill the royal garner, they shall not give so much as a glance to their empty barns at home". According to tradition the oppression of high officials, especially in the outlying provinces that could not be effectively checked by the periodic tours of inspection of the Mahāmātras, twice led to popular revolts in Taxila in the times of Bindusāra and Aśoka, and perhaps also in Ujjain and Kaliṅga in Aśoka's reign. The ancient village gramaṇī became greedy, obnoxious and oppressive styling himself Gāmabhojaka or Gāmasamiko. He conspired with thieves for appropriating revenues as well as fines collected for the king and took bribes in adjudicating village disputes. Sometimes he became fabulously rich acquiring

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millions (aṣītikoṭi dhanaṁ) by dishonest means. "He knows not that there are kings in the land".

The inequality and maldistribution of land and wealth became no doubt pronounced in the late Maurya period. There was also wide-spread corruption in the monasteries into which "wealth and honour flowed like the five rivers", undermining ascetic purity and austerity of living. Monks maintained slaves and servants who begged alms on their behalf and began to live a life of comfort and luxury. In the fraternity there was also a large number of imposters (śatha māyāvina), rogues and criminals who took to monkhood as a way of living. Many monks and nuns became rich enough to make religious donations and endowments. Buhler observes with reference to certain donations for the Sāñchī topes: "They may have obtained by begging the money required for making the rails and pillars. This was no doubt permissible, as the purpose was a pious one. But it is interesting to note the different proceedings of the Jaina ascetics who according to the Mathurā and other inscriptions, as a rule were content to exhort the laymen to make donations and to take care that this fact was mentioned in the votive inscriptions". The strong, efficient and consolidated Maurya empire was not only corroded from within, but also disintegrated through the secession of Kashmir and the Kabul valley in the north-west, and Berar in its south-west flank inviting Greek invasions of the interior even up to the door of the imperial capital. Finally, the Maurya army which ceased to hear the sound of bherī for about three decades became itself ease-loving and luxurious. And it is no wonder that the Maurya emperor's commander-in-chief, Pushyamitra or Pushpamitra Śuṅga, slayed him in about 185 B.C. in the very presence of the imperial army. Perhaps the general discontent encouraged the coup.

The Śuṅga dynasty was the focus of a new Brahmanical revival and resistance against the swelling, expanding tide of the "viciously valiant barbarians", the Greeks who challenged the arms of Magadha for the mastery of Northern India, and whom the later Mauryas (dubbed as "asuras" by certain epic and purāṇic writers) could not stem. The great scholar and grammarian, Patañjali, author of the Mahābhāṣya, the famous commentary on Pāṇini's grammatical aphorisms, was a contemporary of Pushyamitra and contributed a great deal towards the replacement of

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the Pāli of Emperor Aśoka's time by Sanskrit. A considerable body of Brahmanical literature, including parts of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, the original Purāṇa and the Mānava-dharma śāstra, is usually regarded as being produced in the Śuṅga period. Pushyamitra Śuṅga revived the great Vedic horse sacrifice as a symbol of world suzerainty, in which Patañjali himself probably officiated as a priest (iha Pushyamitraṁ yājayāmaḥ). Patañjali mentions not only such elaborate sacrifices as Rājasūya and Vājapeya, but also the daily Panchamātra yajñas, which he states ought to be performed by every householder. It is of interest to note also that he specially speaks of animal sacrifices to the god Rudra. The rehabilitation of Vedic sacred rites and ceremonies, sacerdotalism and Brahmanical authority, the rise of the Kṛishṇa-Bhāgavatism as evidenced by the popularity of plays of Kaṁsavadha and Balibandha, and even the persecution of the Buddhists were features of the return to Brahmanical orthodoxy during the Śuṅga times. But Buddhism was not under a cloud for long; as some magnificent Buddhist monuments were erected in the kingdom of the Śuṅgas. Pushyamitra Śuṅga's dominion extended up to Śākala in the north-west and the river Narmadā on the South. Both Pāṭaliputra and Vidiśā were the seats of Śuṅga imperial administration.

The Aryanisation of the Greek Kings of the North-west

Let us now turn to the north-west whence the menace of the Greeks was coming. The Mauryan and Syrian empires disintegrated almost simultaneously. Parthia and Bactria or Balkh, under Arsaces and Diodotus respectively, seceded from the Seleucidan empire. Demetrius, ruler of Bactria, crossed the Indian frontier and occupied Gāndhāra and a considerable portion of the Punjab and Sind. In course of time the Greek kings of the Punjab became thoroughly Indianised, and many Greeks domiciled in the north-west became Buddhists or Hindu Bhāgavatas and assumed Indian names. The shining example is Heliodorus, the son of Diya (Dion) and a native of Taxila who erected the garuḍa column at Vidiśā in honour of Vāsudeva, the god of gods. The Greek ambassador's familiarity with the Mahābhārata is remarkable; for the inscription repeats the Mahābhārata stress of dama (self-discipline), tyāga

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(renunciation) and apramāda (alertness) as leading to immortality (Mahābhārata, XI, 7, 23). Demetrius (Dattāmitra of the Mahābhārata) and Eucratides issued coins bearing legends in Brāhmī or Kharoṣṭhī characters. A few years later Menander (110-160 B.C.), who probably belonged to the house of the former, reigned gloriously in Śākala or Sāgala (modern Sialkot), his kingdom extending beyond the river Beas. Aṁtalikita (Antialkidās) was the ruler of Taxila in Gāndhāra. It was he who sent Heliodora (Heliodorus), son of Diya (Dion), to the court at Vidiśā. Menandar was of course the greatest among the Indo-Greek kings of the north-west. He is sometimes identified with the Yavana rāj(a) D(i)mi(ta) of the famous Hathīguṁphā inscription of Kharavela (about the 1st century B.C.). His kingdom extended from the Punjab to Saurāshṭra and the western coast of India, and in one of his adventures he occupied Mathurā, besieged Mādhyamikā (near Chitor) in Rajputana and Sāketa in Oudh and even threatened Pāṭaliputra. "The Yavanas were besieging Sāketa and Mādhyamikā", writes Patañjali. "When the viciously valiant Yavanas," mentions the author of the Gārgī Saṁhitā, "after reducing Sāketa, the Pañchāla country and Mathurā, and reach Kusumadhvaja (the royal capital of Pāṭaliputra), the land falls into chaos" The Mālavikāgnimitra also refers to the Yavana invasion of either Demetrios or Menander. A silver coin of Menander was discovered recently in Sāmbhar in Rājpūtānā. But the invasion was repelled. The final defeat of the Yavanas was inflicted on the banks of the Sindhu, the tributary of the Chambal in Gwalior, by the grandson of Pushyamitra (about 187-151 B.C.). On this river stood Agnimitra's far-famed capital Padmāvatī. Two horse-sacrifices were perfomed by Pushyamitra, symbols of defence of Brahmanical culture against the barbarians and establishment of a new Brahmanical empire.

Thus did India prevent the Greeks from becoming the successors of the Maurya empire. The Greeks, such as Heliokles, Antialkidas and Menander, though they ruled over north-western India for about a century and a half and pushed into the Ganges Valley, had to retrace their steps because of internecine strife in their own north-western territory and the onrush of the Parthians or Pahlavas. But these Greeks were not really Yavanas but became Aryanised in their new homeland.

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The Conversion of the Yavanas into Buddhism.

A shining example was the Hellenic ruler of the Indian north-western border land, Menander, (about 155 B. C.) who, like Aśoka was first an invader and conqueror and then a pacifist and lover of Buddhist Dhamma. Menander is called Mahārāja Minadra in a Pṛkrit Kharoshṭhī inscription found at Bājaura (in the North-west Frontier Province) where a stone casket refers to the consecration of a relic of the Buddha. His empire extended from the Kabul to the Ganges valley as far east as Mathurā and to the Arabian sea including the famous port of Barygāzā. Menander, the Milinda of Buddhist literature, used to hold philosophical discourses with learned Brāhmaṇas and ascetics and often defeated them by his superior wisdom and skill in disputation. But when the great Buddhist sage Nāgasena visited his court at Śākala (Sangala of the Alexandrian geographers, Euthydemia of king Demetrius and modern Sialkot in the Punjab), with his retinue of monks, "lighting up the city with their yellow robes like lamps and bringing down upon it the breezes from the heights where the sages dwell", he was converted to Buddhism. One of Menander's beautiful coins appropriately bears the Buddhist dharmachakra. Nāgasena is one of the best types of Buddhist monk-teachers, serene, detached and logical. "The Questions of Milinda" (Milinda Pañho) represents a philosophical dialogue between king Menander and the monk Nāgasena, the latter giving an exposition of the illusory character of the human ego, and is the first text of Buddhist philosophy handed down to us. It is a master-piece of metaphysical argumentation and use of dialectic, exhibiting a combination of Indian philosophical idealism with the Socratic spirit and method of enquiry, and echoing the arguments employed by the Buddhist missionaries in converting the Yavanas. On the eve of the flood-tide of devotionalism and worship of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas and of the sacred relics, that swept north-west India and Gandhāra in the first and second centuries A.D., and gradually transplanted there the second holy land of Buddhism, the Milinda Pañho by a happy blend of the spirit of the Upanishadic Rishi and the Greek Socrates discounts all forms of idolatry. King Milinda asks the monk: "What is the good of setting up a mound to contain the jewel-treasure of the corporeal relics

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(śarīradhātu) of the Tathāgata by way of reverence or gift, though he has died away and accepts it not?" The monk also explains that the Buddha had enjoined that the seeker after truth should practise discipline and meditation instead of worshipping his relics (śarīra-pūjā) and remarks: "And if, O King, he had not said so, then would the Bhikkhus have taken his bowl and his robe, and occupied themselves with paying reverence to the Buddha through them."

But the Milinda Pañho is intended for the philosopher-king and not for the masses who would love and adore the great ascetic (mahāśramaṇa) as the Great Compassionate One (mahākāruṇika). Menander is, indeed one of the romantic figures in early Indian history. Though his cavalry over-ran Kāthiāwār, Rājputānā and the Ganges Valley and all but succeeded in capturing the Śuṅga capital, Pāṭaliputra, he like Aśoka underwent a complete moral and spiritual transformation under the spell of Buddhism. One legend mentions that King Milinda became an arhat, and that after his cremation his ashes were distributed between several Indian cities as relics like those of the Buddha. Here is an example of an astute European mind, at first repelled by Hinduism which cannot answer his psychological and moral queries; ("There is no ascetic or Brāhmaṇa who is capable of disputing with me and solving my doubts"), but is powerfully attracted by Buddhism that has, no doubt, certain universalist aspects. On the other hand, like Aśoka this Indo-Greek king left a name in the history of Buddhism. May it be that the great Greek monarch undertook his expedition against Pāṭaliputra, where Pushyamitra Śuṅga had treacherously captured Imperial authority and replaced Aśoka's dharma by Brahmanism in order to bring the whole of Northern India under the sway of Buddhism? "In all the land of India," we read in the *Questions*, "there was no such monarch as Milinda Rājā. He acquired great riches, and his army was powerful and well-trained". But the intervention of the Indianised Greek Rājā and his burning faith in the new creed which he had adopted and which was being eclipsed by the Śuṅga Brahmanical revival were not destined to bear fruit. For Milinda Rājā had to return immediately to Śākala in order to face a new danger either from an insurrection of the Indo-Greek princes of the Punjab or from Śaka or Parthian invasion. This is indicated by Strabo: "The fiercely

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fighting Yavanas did not tarry long in the Middle Land; a terrible war had broken out in their own land". Like Menander many other Indo-Greeks were converted into Buddhism. The votive offerings in connection with Chaitya gṛhas of many Greek meridarchs are met with in different parts of North-western and Western India. Gifts are made by Ushavadāta (Ṛshabhadatta), a Śaka, who was converted to Brahmanism, for the maintenance of Hindu gods and Brāhmanas as well as for Buddhist Bhikkus. His wife had also an Indian name, Dakshamitrā or Saṁghamitrā. He got eight Brāhmaṇa maidens married away in Prabhāsa and on account of his beneficence to Hinduism he was given the title Ṭrigośatasahasradā, the giver of three hundred thousand cows. Such was the spell of the Indian religions on the foreigners, who came as invaders and were, so to speak, socially Indianised.

The Indo-Greek Rapprochement

Outside the country, Indian sages and philosophers are mentioned with respect by Greek writers and received with honour in the Hellenic courts. The Indian Book of Fables, Pañchatantra, was probably written down in the second century B.C. in Kashmir, although the stories are much older, a few repeating the Jātaka ones. This largely determined the form and technique of the Fables of the Greek slave Aesop, mentioned by Herodotus. Gāndhāra, Kashmir and the Punjab were in this period the focus of Indo-Greek rapproachment. From Śākala, Taxila, Pushakalāvatī and other centres there was constant voyage to Alexandria, as mentioned in the *Questions of Milinda,* and also by the land route through Balkh and the city of Palmyra to Antioch and the forts of Asia Minor and the Red Sea. The Greek orator Dio Chrisostom (100 A.D.) refers to Indian, Bactrian and Scythian residents in Alexandria, and also observes that the Iliad was sung in India where it was translated into an Indian language. Clement of Alexandria knows about the Buddha and Buddhism. He mentions: "There are some Indians who follow the precepts of the Buddha, whom by an exaggerated reverence they have exalted into a god". They have a "kind of pyramid (stūpa) beneath which they believe the bones of some divinity lie buried." Manichæism, preached in the middle of the third century A.D., was considerably influenced by the teaching of the Buddha, who is spoken of as a messenger of God. Mani, its

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founder is spoken of as the Tathāgata; while certain Manichæan scriptures have the form of the Buddhist sutta and Pātimokkha. Terebunthus, one of the Manichæan wise men called himself a new Boddas (Buddha). Later on Plotinus (205-270 A.D.), Bardesanes and Basilides, all seem to have visited the East for the study of religion and philosophy. Clement was the first Greek philosopher to mention the Buddha although Buddhist missionaries under the designations of the Therapeutaes (Theraputra) of Alexandria and the Essenes of Palestine, were familiar figures in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is to these Buddhist monks that Christianity owes certain fundamental conceptions and legends. Several Christian historians refer to the indebtedness of Christianity of the orthodox forms to the observance of celebacy, relic worship and other rituals and austerities in Buddhism. Indian figures found at Memphis in Egypt indicate that under the Ptolemies Buddhism and Buddhist festivals were well-known; while an inscription from the Thebaid is mentioned as being dedicated by Sophon the Indian. Rawlinson observes: "It would be interesting to deal with the influence of India through Alexandria upon the early Christian Church. Monasticism and relic-worship may have been borrowed from Buddhism. Then we may ask whether Christ Himself owed any of His teaching to the Essenes, and they to the Buddhists of Balkh and Persia? Eastern thought influenced Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism, and possibly Origen. Saint Josaphat, Prince of India, as Gautama the Buddha was known, who is still regard as a saint by the Roman Church, reached Europe from Antioch. The presence of Indian fables in the *Gesta Romanorum*, Boccaccio, and in Chancer is also a remarkable fact." There is also a close resemblance between Buddhist and Christian legends of the miraculous conception, the rise of the Star at birth, the prophecy of the sages and the temptation. The Lalitavistara and the Bible stories of the lives of Gautama and Jesus respectively are indeed strikingly similar. The Jātaka also gives the story of the pious disciple of the Buddha walking on the water, and the Lotus of the True law gives the legend of the prodigal son. Like the Lalitavistara and Jātaka legends, ancient folk stories of India, as embodied in the Pañchatantra and the Hitopadeśa, also migrated to the Mediterranean, where the well-known Aesop, who lived at the court of Croesus of Lydia, translated them into

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Greek, and another Greek version attributed to Babrius appeared in the third century A.D. In the same century Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus and Porphyry (232-304 A.D.), famous philosophers of Alexandria, were deeply influenced by Indian philosophical speculation, especially Sānkhya and Buddhist. This was largely due to the presence of monks from India and also of Indian ambassadors who were received at the Court of Emperor Antoninus Pius.

There was a brisk exchange of merchants and scholars between Egypt and the Indo-Greek kingdoms. In the most famous city of the Indo-Greeks, Śākala, Greek traders and philosophers were as much welcome as sages or "leading men of each of the different sects" of India. We read in the *Questions of Milinda*, "Shops are there for the sale of Benares muslin, Kotumbara stuffs, and of other cloths of various kinds, and sweet odours are exaled from the bazaars, where all sorts of flowers and perfumes are tastefully set out. Jewels are there in plenty, such as men's hearts desire and guilds of traders in all sorts of finery display their goods in the bazaars that face all quarters of the sky. So fully is the city of money, and of gold and silverware, of copper and stoneware, that it is a very mine of dazzling treasures. And there is laid up there much store of property and corn and things of value in warehouses—foods and drinks of every sort, syrups and sweet-meats of every kind. In wealth it rivals Uttarakuru and in glory it is as Alasanda (Alexandria), the city of the gods".

The Śuṅga period saw a national renaissance comparable with the Gupta Brahmanical revival. This was focussed round the three principal Śuṅga cities: Vidiśā, the seat of the Śuṅga viceroy, whence Vasumitra, the grandson and general of Pushyamitra, marched off to defeat the Yavanas on the banks of the river Sindhu that formed the barrier between the empire of Pushyamitra and the Yavana kingdom of Western Malwa; Gonarda, lying between Vīdīśā and Ujjain, the birth-place of the famous literary figure of the age, Patañjali (also called Gonarddiya); and Bharhut where was built the famous Buddhist stūpa, an impressive testimony of the religious catholicism of the Śuṅga emperors. This revival was largely the outcome of the spread of the Bhāgavata and Māheśvara cults and the cross-fertilisation of the ancient Brahmanical and Greek cultures. Indian merchants, pilgrims and scholars came from Madhyadeśa

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not only to Malwa, Punjab, Kashmir and Gandhāra, but also visited Syria and Egypt. The cities of the Punjab, the lower Indus Valley, Sauvīra, Kashmir and Gandhāra became the foci of Indo-Greek culture. The later centuries—the Kushan period—saw a more considerable expansion of trade and cultural intercourse between Rome and Northern India. The cosmopolitan character and catholic religious temper of the Kushan age, that saw the revival of the Eastern and Western commerce and cultural intercourse across the trans-Asian routes astride the Kushan Empire, are strikingly illustrated by the figuration of a large variety of Middle Eastern, Greek, Roman, Zoroastrian and Hindu dieties in the gold and silver coins of the Great and Little Kushans. The Kushans ruled a large part of north-western India, and after their conversion to Buddhism were thoroughly Hinduised. Thus their deities came from Babylonia, Messene, Iran and India. The pantheon of the Kushan coinage includes the following deities:—Babylonian: Nana or Nanai Indian Nayanā, (the principal goddess of Uruk), and Hero (Hera, the principal goddess of Syria), Greek and Roman: Zeus, Manaobago (Minerva), Arooaspo (Ares), Erakil (Heracles or Hercules), Helios, Selene, Hephaistos, and Riom (Roma); Iranian deities: Mozdooano (Mazda), Mithro (Mithras or Mithra), Miiro (Mihira or sun-god), Mao (Maha or moongod), Athsho (Atash), Pharro (Farr), Oanindo (Indra) and Ardoksho (Ardibahisht or Ashavahishta) and Hindu deities: Śiva (Maheśvara and Nandi), Oesha (Īsa), Ommo (Umā), Oanindo (Indra), Orlagno (Vṛtraghna), Mitra, Uron (Varuṇa), Oodo (Vāta), Ckando Komato Bizago (Skandha Kumāra Visakha), Maaceno (Mahasena or Kartikeya), Ganeśa (mentioned only by name), Buddo (Buddha), Advaitavādi Sākyamuni and Sarapo (Sarabha). Many were the theistic cults of Hinduism that more than its monism (advaitavāda) appealed to the less civilised foreigners: the worship of Vāsudeva-Krishṇa and Arjuna, Śiva, Skanda and Viśākha (mentioned by Pāṇini and Patañjali) and Mihira or Āditya (worshipped at Multan and Kashmir) before they came under the spell of Mahāyāna Buddhism with its great patriarchs Parsva, Vasumitra, Aśvaghosa and Nāgārjuna who adorned the court of Kanishka, and contributed to bring about a religious and literary renaissance. While in the North the Great Kushans initiated the Mahāyāna Buddhist missionary

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enterprise along the great caravan routes in the Tarim basin to Middle Asia and China, the brisk traffic between India and the Roman Empire, led to the drain of the precious metals that Pliny deplored. In the South the Western discovery of the monsoon by Hippalus (about 48 A.D.) resulted in a similar extension of commerce from the ports of Malabar and Coromandel coasts with Egypt, Syria and Rome. Rome supplied gold, silver, wines, and choice Yavana girls and body guards for the Indian princes, while India exported silks, fine clothes, spices and other luxuries. The merchants, travellers and perhaps also philosophers from Egypt and from the Roman colonies in Asia Minor were familiar figures in such towns of India as Purushapura, Takshaśilā, Mathurā, Ujjain, Broach and Mangalore, just as the Indians, Scythians and Bactrians were to be found in Berenice, Antioch and Alexandria. Greece greatly influenced Indian coinage, the development of astronomy (horā-sāstra) and other positive sciences and above all, the art of Gandhāra, Mathurā and Vidiśā for many decades.

The Romano-Buddhist Art of Gandhara

The Gandhāran art is hybrid, Romano-Buddhist. Art historians now distinguish between two schools. The first is relatively static and insipid, and is marked by the Greco-Roman emphasis of anthropomorphism and individualism rather than by the Indian spirituality and idealism, and the assimilation of symbols and motifs from the contemporary art of the Roman Orient. The second school under the influence of Mahāyāna idealism breathes a purely Buddhist-Indian spirit although the technique is Hellenic. The Buddha and the Bodhisattva masterpieces of the second school of Gandhāra exhibit a profound Indian piety that subdues Hellenism. Gandhāran art reached a Gothic phase in the Kabul valley, as has been ably shown by Grousset. He points out that Mahāyāna mysticism had the same effect on the formal conventions of Greco-Roman art in the production of Gothic, as Latin Christianity had in the West, but a thousand years earlier—"undoubtedly by no means the less curious of the adventures of the human mind." The art of Gandhāra achieved its maturity by the end of the first century A.D. and continued to influence India through the schools of Mathurā, Vidiśā and Sārnāth up to the 5th century. Even at

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Amarāvatī in the Deccan we find the Buddhas of the Gāndhāra school that Grousset characterises as Romano-Buddhist rather than Greco-Buddhist. The influence of the art school of North-west India and the Kabul valley, characterised by a fusion of Hellenism and Hinduism in the cosmopolitan Kushān world, penetrated to every nook and corner of India in the course of five centuries. Just at the time when Indo-Hellenic art was showing a remarkable vigour as well as the acuteness, spirituality and depth of the Gothic sculpture of Rheims, Amiens and Chartres, it was, however, overwhelmed by Mihiragula's conquest and devastation, and a whole chapter was brought to a sudden end—one of the great tragedies in the world history of art.

Many art motifs from distant Gandhāra penetrated to different parts of India including the extreme south representing however, the earlier insipid school and stereotyping the use of the Roman ideal and technique in the imaging of the Buddha—the combination of the Indian sage with the Greek Apollo. Thus Roman art largely determined the type and form of Śākyamuni, although the distinctive Indian auspicious marks on the Buddha's person and his gestures were meticulously presented. Kuvera, the god of wealth, was another familiar figure, half Roman, half Indian, resembling the Roman Zeus with Pallas Athens by his side. Yet in many of these sculptures, though sometimes executed by Greek artists, the old art traditions of the Maurya period are clearly discernible.

The period immediately following showed even a more expanded intercourse of India with the Greco-Roman world and a profounder impress of Hellas on Indian art. The former was due to the Greco-Roman navigators beginning systematically to make use of the south-western monsoon for reaching Bharukachcha, Sopārā, Kalyan, Lyndis, Muziris and other Arabian sea-ports since the first century A.D.; and the latter was due to the establishment in the middle of the first century A.D. of the Kushan empire, extending in its heydey from Gāndhāra to Kāśi that bestowed on Buddhism the same patronage as Aśoka did in the previous age. A remarkable testimony to the cultural intercourse between the West and Northern and Southern India at the beginning of the Christian era is afforded by the establishment of the first Christian Church in Malabar in 52 A.D.

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according to the apocryphal work, the Acts of Thomas of the third century A.D. The Apostle Thomas was sent out as a slave to Abbanes, the representative of Gondophernes of the East. Now Gondophernes (Persian, Vindapharna, i.e., winner of glory,) is an Indo-Pārthian or Śaka Prince of Taxila, to whose court St. Thomas came to preach Christianity, probably by the sea-route from Alexandria to Barbaricum (Sanskrit Bandar) and then along the river Indus. But due to the Kushān invasion and consequent unsettlement in Gāndhāra, St. Thomas had to leave, taking again the sea-route from Barbaricum to Muziris. There he founded the Syrian Christian Church. After two decades of missionary effort in Malabar, St. Thomas went to the Coromandel coast where he became a martyr in A. D. 72. His relics lie in the Cathedral at Mylapore, Madras. The North under the Indo-Greeks and Kushāns, and the South under the Āndhras and Bhārāśivas for some centuries after the fall of the Mauryan empire in the second century B. C. were dominantly Buddhist and Brahmanical respectively, and followed distinct trends of culture, though the forces of world commerce and culture as well as successive drifts of foreigners streaming through the land and sea-routes were fashioning a new liberalism and humanism in both. From the north and north-west, the great Buddhist missionary movement through Gāndhāra, Kashmir and the Tārim basin was just commencing. In the South, Bhāgavatism was establishing itself side by side with the ancient orthodox Brahmanical faith, though Buddhism still survived in important centres. The Romano-Indian commerce was planting islands of Western faith and culture (along with the worship of the Emperor in the temple of Augustus in Muziris in the second third century A. D.) in the great ports of the Arabian Sea and the Coromandel Coast. Conversely, it was perhaps from the Deccan ports that the institutions of Buddhist monachism and relic worship, Neo-platonic ideas and Indian fables along with some beliefs of animism, tree and serpent cult spread like spices, pepper and other merchandise to Alexandria and Rome.

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CHAPTER XI

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CHATURVARNA: SOCIAL ABSORPTION OF FOREIGNERS

The Brahmanical Renaissance under the Andhras

The Brāhmaṇical revival first initiated by the Bhāraśiva-Nāga royal Brāhmaṇ house of Pushyamitra at Pāṭaliputra gradually spread and was deliberately nurtured by Sātavāhana and Pallava kings of South India and the Bhāraśiva-Nāga kings of Central India. The entire continent reacting against Buddhism, Jainism and other heresies and against Mauryan culture turned Brāhmaṇical. Yet the Brāhmaṇical revival was accompanied by a complete overhauling of the ancient Cāturvarṇa scheme and acceptance of the Yavana-Pārasīkas, Śakas, Ābhīras and other foreigners as Kshatriyas and mixed varṇas. The Sātavāhanas led the Brahmaṇical renaissance although they were engulfed at sometimes by a wave of Śaka invasion from the Indus valley. The founder of the Sātavāhana house, Simuka, celebrated his accession to power by undertaking a horse-sacrifice. Brāhmaṇ king fought against Brāhmaṇ king and the rule of the Brāhmaṇ Śuṅgas and Kanvas at Pāṭaliputra was ended by the Sātavāhanas, whose empire extended from Malwa in the west to the banks of the Krishna and Godavari in the east. Pratishṭhāna, Vaijayantī and Amarāvatī became the new centres of the Brāhmaṇical renaissance. Brāhmaṇ ministers came into power recalling Vaśiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra. Brāhmaṇa generals led armies to the battlefields recalling Droṇa, and the Aśvamedha and Vājapeya rites were celebrated with great eclat by victorious kings, such as Sīmuka of the Sātavāhana house and Śivaskandavarman Pallava, recalling Sudāsa and Yudhiṣṭhira. Śimuka is said to have celebrated about twenty sacrifices including two Aśvamedha and several other sacrifices, such as Agnyādheya, Rājasūya, Aptoryāma and Gāvamayāna. Vast sums were spent; and in one sacrifice 24,000 kārshapaṇas and 11,000 cows were given away. This is a restoration with vengeance of Vedic

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sacrifices now invested with rich political and moral significance as waves after waves of foreigners threatened freedom and culture in India. The Brāhmaṇical revival was also associated with a renewed interest in the Vedic deities viz., Indra, Mitra, Agni and Vishṇu. Other deities whose names we come across in the Nānāghāt cave inscription of the first century B.C. include Vāsudeva, Saṅkarshaṇa, Indra and Dharma as well as Sun and Moon and Guardians of the Four Quarters (Lokapālas), viz. Yama Varuṇa, Kubera and Vasava.

Social Recognition of Foreigners and Artisan Groups

Brāhmaṇical orthodoxy was directed against the disintegration of the system of Varṇa that had been going on as the result of the cumulative operation of a variety of factors. Among these are miscegenation due to the foreigners intermarrying with the people on a mass scale, degradation of the higher varṇas to the social status of the Śūdras due to their adoption of improper, dishonourable or menial occupations, the development and complexity of economic life making adherence to the vocations assigned to each varṇa difficult, the movement among the laity, including the Śūdras, both men and women, to embrace the ascetic life as Ājīvakas, Jains and Buddhists, and the general neglect of Vedic rites and ceremonies. The Yavanas or the Asiatic Hellenes were considered as the most esteemed among the foreigners, and regarded as derived from inter-marriage between the Kshatriya males and Śūdra females. Gautama refers to the unanimity among the Smṛti authorities on this question. Centuries of Buddhism led to the gradual diminution of the importance of the priestly class and the Kshatriyas as well as the wealthy Vaisyas came to acquire greater esteem than the Brāhmaṇs. In both the Buddhist literature and the epics we find the position of the upper castes reversed. This trend of a new social stratification and virtual subordination of the priestly to military power, so strongly evident in the epics, was due to the indiscriminate adoption by the Brāhmaṇas of all types of occupations. Many Brāhmaṇas and Kshatriyas by discarding the Vedas and the elaborate Vedic sacrifices, by marrying Śūdra women or by adopting servile or low occupations sank to Śūdrahood. Such occupations as those of the Rathakāra (wheel-wright), Karmakāra (smith), Taksaṇ

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or Tastri (carpenter), Charmannā (tanner) and Vayitri (weaver) were dignified in the Vedic period. Some of these like the Rathakāras were placed as special classes along with the Brāhmaṇs, Rājanyas and Vaisyas, as pointed out by Keith and Macdonell and by Fick, but became degraded because of the notion that manual labour was not dignified. The Rathakāras, we have already seen, were classed with the Chaṇḍālas, Nishādas, Venas and Pukkusas as hīna-jāti in the Jātakas and the Vinaya Pitaka. Thus the processes of decline of social status and prestige are pretty ancient. In the Mahābhārata (Śāntiparva, Chapter 184) we read about the degradation of certain Brāhmaṇs to the Śūdra status due to their loss of character and adoption of dishonourable professions. There is in the Atri-Saṁhitā a specific statement that the Brāhmaṇ becomes a Kshatriya who fights, a Vaisya who engages in agriculture, animal-keeping and trade, and a Śūdra if he sells shellac, salt, saffron, milk, clarified butter, honey and meat. Six categories of Brāhmaṇs are named in a descending order according to the ways of livelihood down to the Nishādha, Paśu, Mlechchha and Chāndāla Brāhmaṇs (373-383). Economic distress or servitude of the Brāhmaṇs and Kshatriyas endangered the Brāhmaṇic scheme of life in the Maurya age when perhaps as many Brahmans amassed considerable wealth (mahāsāla Brahmans) as they were impoverished, adopting the occupation of bhatakas (hired farm-hands), cowherds, goatherds, acrobats, dancers, beggars and thieves (Jātakas, Mahābhārata, anuśāsanaparva, 33, 11 ff). The contrasts of luxury and poverty of the Brāhmaṇs, first discernible in the Maurya period, the acceptance of Buddhism and Jainism and the life of the ascetic by increasing numbers of Śūdras and even Chaṇḍālas, and the general vogue of marriages of higher with lower castes, especially among the Kshatriya groups, led to a widespread lapse of varṇāśrama dharma and āchāra. Even Kautilya permits the inter-marriage between the upper three varṇas and Śūdras. The Dharmaśāstras permitted marriages between the male of a prior varṇa and the female of the succeeding varṇa (anuloma) but disallowed marriages between the male of the lower varṇa and the female of the next higher varṇa (pratiloma). To these were added the new factor of the Mlechchhas or foreigners, coming in large numbers to India, accepting Śaivism, Bhāgavatism and Buddhism, and

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claiming and obtaining as rulers and chiefs the status of Kshatriyas. The rise and propagation of the cults of Kārtikeya and Mihira or Āditya also seem to be associated with foreign interest and adherence. In the Buddhist and Jaina texts we find that the Kshatriyas were the first varṇa. In one of the Jātakas we read: "Even with regard to a Brāhmaṇa the Kshatriya feels superiority so much that King Arindama calls Somaka, the son of Purohita (priest), a man of low birth (hīnajacca, v. 257)." It is thus no wonder that the early foreign immigrants of India aspired after the status of the Kshatriya or the ruling class. In the Purāṇas is mentioned a warrior Viśvasphani of Magadha "who overthrowing all kings . . . . . will make other castes as kings, viz., Kaivaratas, Pancakas, Pulindas and Brāhmaṇs. He will establish those persons as kings in various countries . . . . . overthrowing the Kshatriya caste he will create *another Kshatriya caste*." Social assimilation was promoted by the alacrity with which the foreigners adopted Buddhism and Vaishṇavism and Indian family names, Yavanas converted to Buddhist laity assumed such names as Siṁhadhaya (Siṁhadhairya), Dharma, Chit (Chitra), Chāmda (Chandra) and Indragnidatta, and like the Buddhists performed the usual Vedic rites from garbhādhāna to funeral. The contemporary Brāhmanical opinion was to assign the Yavanas, the Śakas, the Ābhīras and in fact all foreigners who came to India as fighting men to the Kshatriya varṇa and name-endings like datta and varman were adopted by the foreigners to indicate their filiation with the Kshatriyas. Gautama (600 B.C. to 400 B.C.) basing his opinion on the past, observes that the Yavanas (Greeks) were the offspring of a Kshatriya male and a Śūdra female, comprising a mixed varṇa. Baudhāyana (600-400 B.C.) also notes that the countries of Avantī, Anga, Magadha, Saurashtra and Daksiṇāpatha are forbidden lands (niṣiddha deśa) being the homes of the "mixed" castes (I 1,29). But Manu regards the Śakas and Yavanas as originally Kshatriyas but reduced to the status of Śūdras, and enjoins that the Mlechchha and Śūdra-rājyas should be avoided. Vyāsa includes in the list of forbidden lands Anga, Vanga, Āndhra country and generally the regions inhabited by the Mlechchhas. On the other hand, Yājñavalkya, who flourished, according to Jayaswal, in a kingdom somewhere in Madhya-deśa not later than the second century A.D. did not show a particular repugnance to the

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Kushāns that were dominating Northern India in this period, and as converts to Buddhism challenging the Brāhmaṇical social order by creating new castes, and even by replacing Hindu by Buddhist temples.

Racial Admixture in Relation to Varna Rules

The kings of the Brāhmaṇical revival yet tried their best to rehabilitate the varṇa structure, although they themselves were not reluctant to marry Yavanīs. In the Sātavāhana family itself Gautamīputra's son married the daughter of the Śaka Rudradāmana. Foreign influx led to the varṇas getting considerably intermixed as recorded in a Sātavāhana family inscription of the second century A.D. During the same period we find King Sātavāhana Pulumayī of foreign extraction being extolled for his success in preventing the admixture of the four varṇas. New castes were, however, continuously formed as the result of the assimilation of the Aryan groups with the invading tribes, many of whom embraced Bhāgavatism or Vaishṇavism since the second century B.C. Such new castes, products of admixture (varṇa-saṁkara), included the Mlechchhas and the Ājīvas (artisan groups), according to the Vāyu Purāṇa (not later than 500 A.D.) as well as the Vrātyas and Vṛshalas of Manu's classification. The foreigners or Mlechchhas are often characterised in the Epic as well as in the Purāṇas as casteless—the feature which struck the Brāhmaṇic philosopher the most. For Aryan society was built upon the basis of the metaphysical conception of the four functional varṇa groups, grounded in culture and āchāra. There is a clear distinction between varṇa and jāti in Yājñavalkya Smṛti (II, 69 and 206). Yet when the assimilation of various strains of foreigners and semi-Hinduised artisan and aboriginal groups became imperative the earliest Dharmasūtras such as the Gautama (6th or 5th century B.C.) developed the theory of mixed varṇas (varṇa-saṁkara) in order to explain the origin of, and give recognition to, new ethnic groups other than the four recognised varṇas. The theory of mixed varṇa (varṇa-saṁkara), though in some respects unreal and artificial, has been, indeed, of tremendous historical importance in the gradual absorption of foreign groups into the social order. The Brāhmaṇical predilection for abstraction, systematisation and discovery of symmetry in every sphere of existence, including the social life, which was put to a

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severe test by foreign immigration on a large scale, is in fact reflected in the hypothesis of inter-breeding—a view which could enable the Brāhmaṇa legists to open the gates of society to all foreign and diverse elements of the population.

The Smrti Fiction of Varna-Samkara

The theory of inter-breeding (saṁkara) as the basis of formation of new castes within the ambit of Aryan society was first developed in Gautama (6th or 5th century B.C.) and Āpastamba (5th or 4th century B.C.) Āpastamba mentions only the following as mixed castes: Chāndāla, Pukkasa and Vaina. But this list was enlarged gradually by Baudhāyana and Manu. Rathakāra, Svapaka, Vaina and Kukkuṭa were among those added by Baudhāyana. The fiction of varṇa admixture was, in fact, most elaborated in Manu Smṛti, which gives the biggest list of the mixed castes, associates them for the first time with specific callings and also stresses the importance of āchāra and ritual purity. All this made the entry of the foreigners and Indian artisan groups (ājīvas), that were in the fringes of the Brāhmaṇic social order, much easier. Simultaneously the notion of varṇa based on culture and character was superseded by the notion of jāti based on occupation, race and heredity, and varṇa and jāti coalesced as a defence mechanism against the fresh intermingling of the higher varṇas. Yājñavalkya (between the 2nd century B.C. and second century A.D.) observes: "Children born of a union between members of the same varṇa are called sajātis i.e., of the same jāti, sons' born of marriages not permitted only contribute to perpetuate the lineage". Gradually the word varṇa or jāti became interchangeable in the sense of mixed caste as in Manu (X, 27, 31). "The Śūdra is the fourth varṇa ; there is no fifth varṇa" says Manu. To give foreigners or low indigenous groups the status of Śūdras is to be interpreted as giving them social recognition. According to Baudhāyana, those who are born of varṇasaṁkara are called Vrātyas. The fluidity of social relations and the vogue of Varṇasaṁkara in actual society will be evident from the remarks of Yudhiṣṭhira in the Mahābhārata (Vanaparva, 180, 31-33): "It appears to me that it is very difficult to ascertain the jāti of human beings on account of the confusion of all varṇas; all sorts of men are always begetting offspring from all sorts of

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women". Miscegenation was a grave social menace in the early centuries of the Christian era. Yudhiṣṭhira regards character as the principal basis of the determination of varṇa and the epic gives the following shining examples of non-Brahmans rising to the status and honour of Brahman: Ariṣṭasena, Sindhudvīpa, Devāpi and Viśvāmitra (XIII, 143, IX, 39). With reference to jāti (caste) and kula (lineage), the epic observes: "Truthfulness, restraint, tapas, charity, non-violence and conformity to dharma, these led men towards their goal and not caste nor family". (Vanaparva, 181, 42-43). But most Smṛti writers judged varṇa from occupation (vṛtti) and birth (jāti) and at the same time stressed that status could be appreciated or depreciated by character and conduct and decried the mixture or intermingling of varṇas. In Manu the Vrātyas and Vṛshalas are usually regarded as approximating to the Greeks or Yavanas (derived from Greek Ionian) and the various immigrant Mlechchha tribes that could be assimilated into Hinduism after the observance of the Vrātyastoma ritual. Manu specifically mentions the Yavanas (Greeks), Kambojas, Śakas (Scythians), Pāradas, and Pahlavas (Parthians) among Kshatriya clans who are "degraded" (Vrātyas) for disregarding both Brahmans and established ceremonials and have sunk in this world to the condition of Śūdras. The Āśvalāyana Sutta describes the Yonas (Yavanas) and Kambojas as peoples adhering to a different social scheme that "admits of nothing but a general distinction between the master (ārya) and slave (dāsa) with no insurmountable barrier between the two groups and making it possible for men to pass from one class to another according to opportunities and vicissitudes of life".

The Mahābhārata places the Yavanas, Kambojas and Gandhāras in the north-west frontier, Gandhāra; while Buddhaghosa's Papañcasūdanī mentions them as belonging to the Pārasika-varṇa. The Purāṇas mention the following peoples living in the western and north-western parts of India: the Yavanas, the Śakas, Pāradas, Tushāras, Kambojas and Pahlavas; and in the Mahābhārata the first two actually participate in the Battle under the Kamboja king Sudakshiṇa. According to the Śukranīti the Yavanas had all the four castes mixed together, disregarded the authority of the Vedas and lived in the north and west. D. R. Bhandarkar is of the view that in early times Yavana always denoted the Greek nationality, but from the

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second century A.D. it may have meant the Persians. Not only was the entire region comprising the Indus Valley, Kashmir, Gandhāra and parts of Western India the focus of Yavana-Pārasika or Perso-Hellenistic culture, with its filiations to the Mediterranean region, but there was also foreign cultural infiltration even in the Madhyadeśa due to both the considerable volume of immigration and the eagerness with which the foreigners, the "dreaded barbarians" (dāruṇa Mlechchhdayah) of the Mahābhārata, were accepting Indian habits and creeds.

The Relaxation of Caste

The greatest of the Śātavāhana monarchs, Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi, called himself the destroyer of the Yavanas, Śakas and Pahlavas, and as he sought to restore the four-fold Hindu-social gradation (chāturvarṇa), protected the Brāhmaṇas (dvijas) and avaras (the lower functional groups) and repressed the fallen or degraded Kshatriya groups. Yet Hindu society gradually accepted the principle, stressed in the Brahmanical Smṛtis, that in the marriage of a higher with a lower caste, the caste of the father is significant and determines the son's status. The Buddha in one of the Jātakas observes: "The old wise men acted according to the principle: the family of the mother does not matter; the family of the father alone is important". There is, no doubt, that the wide vogue of heterodoxy as represented by the creed of the Ājīvakas, Jainism and Buddhism, the adoption of the homeless life by the intellectual classes and the great racial admixture especially among Kshatriya clans completely changed varṇa ideals and regulations. If Jainism retained in large measure the Indian scheme of classes and castes and showed grater adaptation to Brāhmanism, than Buddhism, the religion of the Buddha grounded itself in a new conception of the dignity of man. When the chāturvarṇa system was being glorified and revised as a natural reaction against the influx of the "mingled barbarous hordes of Yavanas and Śakas" to which the Rāmāyaṇa gives witness, both the Vaśishṭha Smṛti, that was most harsh and invidious in its assertions of Brahmanical superiority and Śūdra inferiority, and the liberal Divyāvadāna were composed (probably first century A. D.). In the latter well-known Hīnayāna text, King Prasenajit comes to the Buddha along with many Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas and citizens of Śrāvastī to complain

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against the Buddha's procedure of ordaining a Caṇḍāla girl as a nun. The Buddha pacifies them by his logic and liberal social outlook, and the king and people are convinced how frail the claims of the Brāhmaṇa caste are. It is pointed out that "such differences as exist among the different kinds of animals and plants, cannot be shown among the castes. Moreover, according to the theory of the transmigration of souls and of Karma, there cannot be any castes, as everyone is reborn according to his actions".

The egalatarian gospel of Buddhism completely and permanently changed the spirit of caste. But the rise of the foreign Greek and Buddhist Kushān power for at least two centuries in Northern India after the fall of the Maurya Empire indirectly contributed towards a revival of orthodoxy under the Āndhras and the Bhāraśiva-Nāga kings in Central India. Brāhmaṇism and the Varṇāśrama scheme of society, indeed, found a refuge, first in the Sātavāhana dynasty and then, in the Nāga-Bhāraśiva dynasty, which claimed Kshatriya descent, extended their power up to the Ganges valley and performed Aśvamedha sacrifices. The Bhāraśiva power merged into the rising power of the Brāhmaṇa Vākātakas, who were a dominant power till the rise of the Guptas and who were also defenders, for one century, of Brāhmaṇical faith, sacrifices and varṇāśrama dharma and āchāra. No wonder that the Purāṇas speak of the greatness of the Vindhya-Śakti Vākāṭakas on whom fell the task of defending the Brāhmaṇical culture against the habits and manners of the foreign-born Buddhists who were dominating Northern India until the rise of the Guptas.

The Popular Cult of Bhagavatism

Hinduism also reacted to the new social climate through the diffusion of the Sānkhya, Yoga and systems of Āgama of various schools of Asceticism as well as the Vaishṇava and Śiva-Bhāgavata cults that did not stand on Vedic foundations exclusively and that all opened altogether new avenues to the lower orders for the acquisition of the essential values of Brāhmaṇism. In the 4th century B.C. we find a mention of the worship of Vāsudeva and Arjuna in Pāṇini, and of Vāsudeva and Baladeva in the Buddhist work Niddesa. Mathurā was the most important centre of the Vāsudeva-Krishna cult (with its two important cities,

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Mathurā and Krishṇapura); and Megasthenes (320 B.C.) noticed that the Śūrasenas of the Yamunā valley worshipped Herakles, undoubtedly Hari or Krishṇa. The Bhāgavata dharma and Vāsudeva-cult spread from the Yamuna valley to Central India, Rajputana and Mahārāshṭra, and by the second century B.C. it was a popular cult throughout India, attracting foreigners. In Vidiśā the worship of Saṁkarshaṇa, Vāsudeva and Pradyumna, associated with the Pañcharātra doctrine, is indicated by inscriptions of the 2nd—1st century B.C. The celebrated inscription of Vidisā, about 180 B.C. of the Greek convert Heliodorus mentions Vāsudeva as the God of Gods (devadeva) in whose honour the foreigner erected a flag staff with the image of Garuḍa on the top. The Nanāghāt cave inscription of the first century B.C. invokes both Saṁkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva among other deities; while the Ghosundi and Hathibada inscriptions mention Pārāsarīputra Sarvatāta as having constructed a stone enclosure for the place of worship called Nārayāṇa vāṭa for Bhagavat Saṁkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva. The Tusam inscription of the 4th or 5th century A.D. mentions Yasastrāta as a devotee of Bhagavat belonging to the Brāhmaṇ Gotama gotra who inherited the Yoga practice of the Arya Sātvatas through many generations. This yoga practice refers, according to the Sātvata Saṁhitā, to the contemplation of Vāsudeva, the Supreme Brāhmaṇ according to his quadruple nature (vyūha), as represented by Vāsudeva, Saṁkarshaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. This is the ancient Vyūha doctrine which we come across in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata. According to the tradition supported by the Pāñcarātra scriptures each Vyūha represents a manifestation of the Supreme Being emerging in successive order corresponding to the order of cosmic causation. The order is as follows: (1) Saṁkarshaṇa who presides over Ahaṁkāra, (2) Vāsudeva who presides over Citta; (3) Pradyumna who presides over Buddhi; (4) Aniruddah who presides over Manas. For well-nigh seven or eight centuries Bhāgavatism took the form of worship not merely of Vāsudeva, the first of the four Vyūhas, but also of the three other Vyūhas. As a matter of fact in one of the Sātvata Tantras we have not only the four original Vyūhas, but also five additional ones, making a total of nine Vyūhas—Nārāyaṇa, Nṛisiṁha, Hayagrīva, the Mahāvarāha and Brahmā. Thus the practice of the Yogic contemplation of Vāsudeva, according to

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his four-fold nature, at the end of the last millennium, as evident in the Vidiśā inscriptions, is corroborated by the Gupta inscription. It appears that the foreigners were attracted to the worship of Reality according to the metaphysical quadruple arrangement or division. The Bhāgavata Purāna mentions specifically the foreigners who became converts to Bhāgavatism: Kirāta, Hūṇa, Andhra, Pulinda, Pukkasa, Ābhira, Suhma, Yavana and Khasa. According to a Syrian legend, the cult was prevalent in Syria as early as the second century B. C. reaching there by the familiar land-route of trade. The bid of Krishṇa-Bhāgavatism to become an orthodox Indian religion is clearly indicated in the second century B. C., by the assimilation of Vāsudeva-Krishṇa into the earlier Vedic gods, Vishṇu and Nārāyaṇa. In the Mathurā museum there is a stone slab beonging to the Kushān period which shows Vasudeva crossing the Yamunā with the infant Krishṇa in his flight to Gokula in order ro save his son from the wrath of Kaṁsa. Another sculpture represents Krishṇa-Govardhana-dhara with cowherds and kine. Both these are saturated less with the Parkham vigour and massiveness and more with the inherently sensuous quality and rhythm of the folk plastic language as in the traditional Yaksha or Vṛkshakā figures. A pillar of Mandor, Jodhpur, belonging to the fifth century, also depicts the Krishṇa legends of the lifting of the Govardhana hill and the over-turning of the cart. It is of course in the Gupta period that Bhāgavatism establishes itself as the most popular, even imperial creed as recorded in so many noble sculptures and inscriptions.

The Origin of the Vasudeva-Krishna Image in Mathura Art

The earliest Vāsudeva-Krishṇa image are the standing four-armed figures of the Kushān period, found also at Mathurā. The sculpture of Mathurā fashioned both the standing Vishṇu and Buddha figures on the pattern of the ancient Parkham and other Yaksha images, and thus satisfied the contemporary need of giving expression to the new Bhāgavatism in the folds of both Buddhism and Hinduism. Probably installed at Mathurā in the beginning at the instance of the Sourasenas or the Sātvata sect the Vishṇu image soon became immensely popular due to the transformation in the religious outlook of the people by bhakti. Archæological evidence points to the priority of the Vāsudeva

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image to the image of the Buddha, the former being installed in temples at the time of Śoḍāsa or Śoṁdasa, the Śaka satrap (mahākṣatrapa) of Mathurā and Taxila, (about A.D., 15) who founded a large Indo-Scythian Empire that probably extended from the Indus delta and Kathiawad to the Jamunā Valley. Brāhmaṇical as well as Buddhist art in the next few centuries centred round the making of images of deities and of temples connected with the various creeds. The efflorescence of Mathurā art in the Jamunā valley in the first and second centuries A.D. is at once the cause and consequence of the appearance of the Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and Buddha images. It is a paradox that the Protestant revolt against ceremonial sacrifice and institutional religion led by the two master minds of India, Kṛṣṇa and Gautama, lost itself in the worship of images that they both condemned in unequivocal terms. The Buddha observes, "For truly they honour me who fulfil the higher and the lower Law". The admonition in the Vajra-cchedikā-sūtra is even more emphatic: "He who looks for me through any material form, or sees me through any audible sound, has entered on an erroneous course and shall never behold the Tathāgata". Similarly the Bhagavad-gītā clearly enjoins that the highest worship is that of the formless, unborn Absolute, and that the gods are but limited forms of this. The lesser Devas bring less rewards, while devotion to the Absolute brings the supreme reward (IX, 25, 26). But the feelings and affections of the people stirred by the upsurge of Bhāgavatism in both Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical worlds demanded images (pratimā); and the graceful sculpture of Mathurā abundantly fulfilled this demand. The Parkham, Baroda, Patna and Pawaya Yaksha represent the earlier generic type from which the patterns of the Bodhisattva and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa images of Mathurā and elsewhere were derived. Even the standing poses and the folds on the garments of the Bodhisattva, Vishṇu and of Indra (in the Bodh-gayā railing, 1st century B.C.) show a remarkable similarity with those of the Yakṣa statuary. The Mathurā art catered to the emotional needs of all contemporary creeds, and from the first to the sixth century moulded the motifs and canons of art in the different culture areas of India as well as abroad. The powerful indigenous traditions of iconography in early Indian sculpture got a stimulus, a definition and a setting from the contemporary sculpturing of the Kushān Emperor by the Mathurā

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school, especially as the Indian literature drew no distinction between the Cakravartī in the secular and in the spiritual realm; and perhaps there was also infiltration of the Roman notion of the worship of the Emperor-deity through Gandhāra and the southern ports. The latter reflected itself in the Kushān coinage and influenced the more elegant Hindu and Buddhist cultures. Itself the product of a superb synthesis of popular Yaksha and contemporary cults of Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism as well as Græco-Buddhist influences, the Mathurā school embodies the genius and ideal of Indian art in its abstraction, simplicity and dynamic rhythm. It was, however, in the social climate of the early Gupta age with its broad humanism, racial admixture and national revival, focalised round the mythical exploit of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa-Cakrapāṇi, that Kṛṣṇa Bhāgavatism evolved into the status of a national religion with the Imperial Guptas calling themselves Parama Bhāgavatas or worshippers of Bhāgavata or Vāsudeva. It is singular that a Gupta inscription belonging to the Parivrājaka Mahārāja actually opens with the sacred Vaishṇava mantram: "Om Namo Bhagavatē Vāsudevāya."

In the Kāvyas of Kālidāsa we find not only Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa identified with Vishṇu and Nārāyaṇa, but Kṛṣṇa is also called Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa. He has obtained the Kaustubha jewel from the serpent Kālîya of the Jamunā, "wears the peacock feathers resembling the cloud adorned with rainbow", and his wife is Rukmiṇī and his brother Balarāma. In a famous long prayer to Vishṇu in the Raghuvaṁśa (X. 13-63), Vishṇu is praised as the sole refuge of the seven worlds (Sapta-lokasya saṁśraya) and abides in the hearts of all. "To persons whose minds are surrendered to Him, whose actions are dedicated to Him and who have completely relinquished all worldly desires, He is the sole refuge for obtaining salvation". This is reminiscent of the bhakti-yoga of the Bhagavad-gītā. Kālidāsa gave superb expression to the swelling tide of bhakti in Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism of his age. Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism was the most popular religion in the Gupta and post-Gupta epoch and obtained converts from foreigners as well as from the Śūdras and women. Gradually it won the hearts of the Vedic Brāhmans and Kshatriyas. The Mahābhārata became the chief vehicle of the Bhāgavata-dharma and Vāsudeva cult. The epics and the entire Paurāṇic literature

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called collectively Jaya-śāstra (auspicious literature) were recited by first saluting Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna, Sarasvatī and Vyāsa and promulgated Bhāgavatism and Bhakti.

The Rise of Siva-Bhagavatism

Śiva-Bhāgavatism also spread during this epoch under the inspiration of sage Lakulīśa, who probably lived in the time of Patañjali and was a disciple of Śiva-Śrīkaṇṭha. The latter according to the Mahābhārata first preached the Pāśupata doctrines. Patañjali not only mentions the Śiva-Bhāgavatas but also refers to the stress they lay on the worship of images. Its popularity and diffusion in Northern India were signalised by the conversion of the Kushān conqueror of India, Kadphises, who in his imperial capital at Taxila depicted Śiva with his trident and bull in one of his coins. In this case, too, there was assimilation to the Vedic God, Rudra-Śiva (also called Bhava, Īśāna, Śarva). The term Śiva or the Good is intended to offset the frightening character of the Vedic deity, Rudra. In the later Vedic literature Śiva becomes the Great God Mahādeva and is identified with the Vrātyas or outcastes. In the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad great prominence is given to Śiva, the Absolute, who can be reached through ardent devotion. But the conception of Śiva is not built up only by the Vedic faith and tradition; for Śiva was also the Lord of the Animals (Paśupati) of the Indus valley people. The animals that surround the Mohenjodaro deity are the tiger, elephant, deer, buffalo and rhinoceros. In the Mahābhārata all these animals are associated with Śiva Paśupati. He wears the tiger's and the elephant's skin, and is also the destroyer of the buffalo and rhino (Mahiṣaghna Gāndālin). The cults of Rudra, Śiva, Paśupati and the Liṅgam (both in crude stone and mukha liṅga forms) gradually coalesced into a fully developed theistic Śiva-Bhāgavatism that spread in the Gupta age from Western India to Eastern Bengal. The Indo-Aryan recognition of Śiva's legitimate divine status is recorded in the sequel of Dakṣa's magnificent and pompous sacrifice to which Śiva was not invited due to his supposed low-origin, resulting in a catastrophe for both heaven and earth. In the dialogue between Śiva and Dakṣa recorded in the Mahābhārata, the former mentions that "in ancient times he formulated the Pāśupata system which was contradictory to, though

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in a very few cases agreeing with, the regulations of the varṇāśramadharma and which was denounced by the universe". The Vāyu Purāṇa often mentions the sect, the Lakulīśa Pāśupatas, gives two quotations from the Svetāśvatara Upanishad which seems to have been the foundation scripture of the Pāśupatas, and also enumerates the following four sons or disciples of Śiva. Śveta, Śikhā, Śvetāśva and Śvetalòhita. Lakulīśa (holder of Lakula or club) or Nakulin must have come later than these spiritual teachers of Śaivaism and refashioned the original Pāśupata yoga on the basis of the Svetāśvatara Upanishad whence is to be traced Brahmanical worship of Śiva or Īśāna (liṅga) presiding over the yoni. The Kūrma purāṇa (XVI) mentions the following Śaiva sects: Pāśupatas, Bhairavas, Vāmas, Nakulas and Kapālas with their own Śāstras. It was the mingling of the Aryan and Indo-Aryan elements that favoured Śiva-Bhāgavatism, particularly its Pāśupata form with its stress of both human loving worship and divine grace. Its authority was represented by the eighteen Āgamas (or folk traditions that came into existence in the Gupta period), which did not always follow the backing of revelation or the Śrutis, and hence were in some measure suspect.

Mysticism and the Social Egalatarian Trend

As a matter of fact in the centuries immediately preceding the beginning of the Christian era, all faiths in India assumed a bhakti character. Vāsudeva, Śiva, the Buddha as well as the four Guardians of the Quarters the Yakshas—all were styled Bhāgavatas. Pāṇini refers to bhakti directed towards Māhārājas the Four Great Kings of the Quarters. The same spirit of devotion is descernible even in the Majjhima Nikāya, which says: "He who has faith (śraddhā) in Me and love (prema) for Me will attain heaven", while we have the inscription at Bhārhut (2nd Century B.C.) Bhagavato Saka Munino Bodho, and on the Piprāhwā vase, Bhagavato Śākyamuni. The coming into prominence of Bhāgavatism focussed the protest against renunciation and asceticism, prominent in the heresies of Jainism and Buddhism, stressed the obligations to family and society and put spiritual exaltation, associated with the worship of a personal diety, above religious intellectualism and a dry, moral outlook. Both Kṛṣṇa and Śiva Bhāgavatism were accepted more by the

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foreigners and low castes than by the high-born of India, and went against the varṇāśrama dharma in admitting everybody to worship and to yogic practice or sanyāsa. The early traditional attitude against Bhāgavatism is shown by the following observations of Atri: "Those Brāhmaṇs who are devoid of Vedic lore study the śāstras (Grammer, logic etc); those devoid of śāstraic lore study the Purāṇas and earn their livelihood by reciting these; those who are devoid of purāṇa reading became agriculturists; and those who are devoid even of that became Bhāgavatas. Initiation was thrown open to Śūdras and women whose status markedly improved as the Pāñcharātra Śaivas and Pāśupatas gained adherents largely from outside the pure Brāhmaṇical fold. The Jayākhya-saṁhitā, regarded as one of the most authoritative scriptures of the Pāñcharātras, and dated about the middle of the 5th Century A.D., disregarded sacerdotalism and gifts to the Brāhmaṇs; the Pāñcharātra Saṁhitās were to be preferred to the Vedas for the knowledge of Vāsudeva, "the final truth", and the Yatis, Āptas, Ācāryas, Ekāntins and Vaikhānasas to the Brāhmaṇs. Similarly the Pāśupatas or Āgamic Śāivas went against the Varṇāśrama system and ignored the Vedas, ritualism and gifts to the Brāhmaṇs. In the Padmapurāṇa we find the creed of the Śāivas as follows: "What is the necessity of gifts or other vows or the Vedas or the sacrifices? The status of a Gaṇapati is sure to be attained as soon as ashes are besmeared on the body (there is) no virtue like the ashes, no austerity like these, the blind the humpbacked, the stupid, the illiterate or the members of the different castes such as the Śūdras if they are characterised by matted hair, are undoubtedly worthy of respect. Viśvāmitra though a Kshatriya, became a Brāhmaṇa by austerity. Vālmīki, a thief, became the foremost of Brāhmaṇs. So no discrimination should be made in this matter by the Śiva worshippers. One becomes a Brāhmaṇa by means of austerity and the determination of castes should be made in this way". Religious mysticism and a social egalatarian movement aided each other in this new evolution in Hinduism that could now successfully meet the challenge of the liberal, egalatarian heresy of Buddhism. No doubt the large influx of the Hellenes and other foreigners, most of whom could not appreciate the philosophical outlook of orthodox Brāhmanism, their hankering for personal religion and worship as well as the unloosening of the caste structure and of

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the hold of the Brāhmaṇical priesthood due to racial admixture, were significant factors in the evolution of the ultimate forms of Śāivism, Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism. The two latter faiths founded themselves equally in a reconciliation of theistic faith with ancient metaphysical speculation, a Messianic hope and an egalatarian social trend. All this prepared the way for the Hinduisation of the Śakas and Kushāns who gradually adopted the names, manners, religions and languages of India. The son of Chashṭana became Jayadāman, the son of Rājula was Śoḍāsa, the son of Chhagaliga became Vishṇudāsa. The Kushān Emperor Huviṣka was succeeded by Bazo-deo or Vāsudeva. Kadphises II and Vāsudeva represented in their coins the worship of Śiva. Such was the Hinduisation, especially of the Great Kushāns, that they played the most important role in the spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Middle Asia and China. On the other hand, the success of Hinduisation of the Yavanas, Śakas, Pāradas and Pahlavas (Parthians) is recorded by Manu who mentions them as Kshatriya tribes that suffered degradation due to non-observance of rituals and neglect of the Brāhmaṇ priesthood.

The Gothic Spirit in the National Art of Amaravati

India, south of the Vindhyas, did not experience the admixture of stocks, cultures and cults that the North under the Græco-Scythian kingdom witnessed. As in many later centuries, the South under a powerful Empire fully expressed and developed the real genius of Indian culture during the three centuries from the third quarter of the first century B.C., till the first quarter of the third century A.D. The Andhra Empire was both Hindu and Buddhist, and extending as it did from the Arabian sea-coast to the Bay of Bengal and enjoying fully the advantages of both Mediterranean and Indonesian trade, developed a cosmopolitanism and humanism that were fully utilised by the national genius. The result was an artistic renaissance evident in the sculptural work of Jaggayyapeṭa, Amarāvatī, Nāgarjunikoṇḍa, Alluru, and Gummadidirru. The art of the Kṛṣṇā-Godāvarī Doab is free from the influence of the Roman-Gandhāran style of the North, on the one hand and links Bhārḥut and Sāñchi with Classical Gupta art, on the other. At its height the art is Gothic in spirit, embodying a remarkable combination of human

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sensitiveness and transcendental mystery hardly met with again in India. For its counterpart one has to go to Bengal of the Pālas, to Borobodur and China and to medieval France. The art reveals in crowded scenes, where human figure, plant and animal are juxtaposed in their rich tropical prolificness. The stalk of the lotus plant here swells to an enormous size but as it moves like a huge serpent, accompanied by running men, is as light and delicate as a garland of flowers, leaves and buds. The significance of the motif lies in its association with the Buddha whose presence is indicated by a throne. In the South Indian tropical environment, life is full, exuberant and multiplying, and not mellowed and tranquilized by the temper and experience of the Buddhist renunciation and abstraction. Thus the art of Amarāvatī is full of scenes of human gatherings, songs, dances and movements in which many participate, and the multitude is integrated together by deep transcendental stirrings that cross the boundaries of the reliefs. In few sculptures of the world the scenes are so thick and eye-filling with human figures, yet bound together by a dynamic rhythm as well as by the profound piety underlying the myth and legend. Arms are upraised, shoulders bent, legs crossed, bent or lifted, and whole crowds simply abandon themselves in song, dance and ascent. The translation of the Buddha's begging-bowl at Amarāvatī resembles in its compositional rhythm the Rāsa-Maṇḍala of medieval Rājpūt painting. Contrasted with the diagonals of active movements there are also parallels and verticals of langour scenes. There is the roundel at Amarāvatī, depicting Prince Timiya who was sought to be lured by a bevy of women dancing and singing. Empty spaces are here utilised to stress langour, and foreshortening and over-secting of limbs to emphasise tension. In the whole field of Indian art the sculpture of Amarāvatī is unparalleled in the superb blend of the devotional mood and sensuousness, the eased ecstasy and the earthiness of living. The scenes of the four women bowing at the feet of the Buddha, of men and women adoring the Stūpa and of the tense excitement at the descent of the Elephant of the Conception are characterised by a melting softness and spiritual ardour which underlie the rise of the Mahāyāna and Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism. In many nude female figures in Amarāvatī we have a unique combination of Botticellian slender grace with the purity and simplicity of the work of Fra Angelico, anticipating

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the frescoes of Ajantā and Bāgh and the sculptures of Rhcims and Chartres. The same spiritual fervour is discernible in the famous medallion, depicting the miracle of the infuriated elephant rushing at the crowd, and finally prostrating itself at the feet of the serene and smiling Buddha, who thus defeats the stratagem of Devadatta. Spiritual imagination here abolishes the difference between miracle and reality; the taming of the infuriated beast merely illustrates an intense emotional experience.

At Amarāvatī we find allusive symbols as well as representations of the Buddha in numerous episodes of Buddhist legend. But whether the Buddha is actually represented in the human figure or not, there is manifest in each scene a touching bhakti towards the great Compassionate One (Mahākāruṇika). We have here also some of the most elegant nudes in the world's sculpture, but the sensuous appeal is subdued and refined by the moral ardour, the brooding sense of the impermanence of life and futility of sense enjoyment, as at Ajantā or Borobodur of the later ages. Unlike Ajantā and Borobodur, Amarāvatī is, however, tense, earthly and agitated, and thus its naturalism is all the more delightful. Mahāyāna Buddhist religious piety has in the art of Pratiṣṭhāna spiritualised the naturalism of Bhārhut and Sāñchi and the sensuousness of Mathurā.

Southern Humanism and Cosmopolitanism

Such artistic idealism characterised by tremulous, ardent modelling and dynamic rhythm of the ensemble, though it lacks the greater clarity, poise and spirituality of Classical Gupta art, could not have been achieved but for an intensified awareness of life and its environment in the Sātavāhana period, of which we have an abundant testimony from the social side in the tales of love and adventure of the Bṛhatkathā of Guṇāḍhya, from the religious side in the construction of numerous Buddhist cave monasteries in the Deccan, and from the economic side in the development of overseas trade as is evident from the rich finds of Roman coins in the Southern ports.

The relative immunity from the inroads of the Śakas and other foreigners and the geographical position of the Empire of Pratiṣṭhāna in the heart of India with its enormous development of trade, commerce and cultural activity enabled it to

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preserve the purity of the Indian æsthetic ideal and express in the agitated rhythms of its art an eternal poignancy and transcendentalism of human devotions reaching out to superhuman dimensions that the art of India and Greater India emulated in subsequent generations. In the north-west and in the heartland of India, the schools of Gandhāra and Amarāvatī art flourished almost contemporaneously under the influence of the sudden outburst of culture, commerce and learning in the Græco-Scythian and Śātavāhana worlds. Amarāvatī art was, however, truer to the national inspiration and faith of India, nourished as it was by the freedom and immunity from foreign inroads and aggressions under the Sātavāhana Empire that was not only a refuge for the national genius as opposed to the Śaka and Kushān Kingdoms, but was also a bridge between the Āryan civilization of the North and the Dravidian civilization of the South.

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PART IV

THE FLOWERING OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER XII

THE EPIC IDEALS OF HUMAN RELATIONS

Early Lays and Legends

As the Indo-Āryans crossed mountains and river valleys in the long march from their home-land into the valley of the Sarasvatī and the Dṛshadvatī, their mind was full of memories of heroic episodes and great happenings. These included not merely bitter and long continued wars between the Aryans and the non-Āryans, described as the Devas and the Asuras, in which warriors, sages and ascetics all participated but also feuds and conflicts between groups among the Indo-Āryans themselves. Gradually tales of war and victory, courage and loyalty, tragedy and grief crystallised themselves into epic song verses (gāthās), hero-lauds (nārāśaṁsīs) and clan histories, (ākhyānas and itihāsas). These came to be embodied later on in the Brāhmaṇas and recited by the bards at intervals during the great Aśvamedha and other sacrifices that took several months at a stretch. Princes of the Kuru and Kośala kingdoms were among the celebrated sacrificers; and it is no wonder that legends of Ikshvāku and Hariścandra and of Arjuna, Parīkṣit and Janamejaya, the first two of whom appear as gods in later Vedic literature, were sung from mouth to mouth in accompaniment with the lute or the seven-stringed lyre. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa makes mention of the hostility between the Kurus and the Sriñjayas, which in the Mahābhārata often looms as the battle of Kurukshetra, while a gāthā in the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad (IV, 17, 9–10), according to Hopkins, alludes to the disaster of the Kurus. Vālmīki and Vyāsa, the celebrated authors of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata respectively, are mentioned in the later Vedic texts. Āśvalāyana and Pāṇini (5th century B.C.) refer to such lays and legends. The latter refers to the Mahābhārata and mentions the name of

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Yudhiṣṭhira. Certain bas-reliefs of the 2nd century B.C. illustrate the tale of Daśaratha and Rāma. The Rāmāyaṇa is certainly older than the Mahābhārata which mentions Vālmīki as well as the epic itself, while the tale of the Pāndu kings of the Mahābhārata seems to be indicated by Greek writers of the fourth century B.C. who refer, to the Indian Herakles (Kṛṣṇa) and to Pandia (the Pāṇḍus). Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra also refers to the stories of misdeeds of both Rāvaṇa and Duryodhana of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata respectively. Jacobi points out that the Rāmāyaṇa must have been generally familiar as an ancient work before the Mahābhārata reached its final form. Sūkthankar suggests that the Rāmāyaṇa was composed in the interval which separated the Bhārata from the Mahābhārata, the Chaturviṁśatisahasrī and the Śatasahasrī. Most scholars consider that the Mahābhārata arose between the 2nd and 5th centuries A.D. Sylvain Levi observes in this connection that the Mahābhārata, Śatasahasrī Saṁhitā and *corpus absolutissimum* of the Brāhmaṇical Smṛti, pertains to the series of those great corpora which flourished even in the first centuries of Christian era, that is of the Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā and of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivāda movements of Buddhism and of the Bṛhatkathā by Guṇāḍhya, a monument in profane literature.

Dharma in the Ramayana

The heroes and heroines, the fighting men and sages of both the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, have moulded the character of the people through the ages. The unswerving obedience of Rāma to truth and righteousness, to parents and people, the supreme loyalty and attachment of brother Lakshmaṇa, the fidelity and tenderness of Sītā "following her husband like a shadow," her heroism and serenity when she is under Rāvaṇa's grip and her fortitude and dignity as she faced the worst humiliation from Rāma, or the self-effacing devotion of Hanumān, all these repeated in magnificent poem (kāvya) and poignant drama, thrilling song and sweet cradle-tale in all the languages of India, have been the perennial springs of goodness, justice, love and sacrifice of the Indian people through the generations.

Indian personality and virtues are writ large in the gods, heroes and heroines of the epics. National morality is embodied

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in the colourful drama as it moves on from one end of each epic to the other. And what better clue to Indian character and civilisation can there be than the story of the composition of the first rhythm and śloka in Indian literature out of Vālmīkī's overflowing compassion at the sight of the blood-stained bird krauñcha, killed mercilessly by the hunter and bewailed bitterly by its mate? The compassionate poet's admonition of the hunter marks the creation of the first rhyme in India. In this new inspired metre born of tenderness, pity and indignation, the whole of the Rāmāyaṇā was composed by Vālmīki.

Like its sister epic, the Rāmāyaṇa is a veritable encyclopædia of archetypal myths, tales and legends in which we find at once the combination of the din and roar of battles of titans and gods with the serenity of the forest hermitages of sages and ascetics, of the pomp and magnificence of stately capitals with the beauty and enchantment of rain, autumn and spring, of the cunning, treachery and inhumanity of vicious men and rākshasas, small and great, with the glorious human attributes of friendship, loyalty, sweetness and infinite tenderness towards man and beast. Over the kaleidoscopic succession of great episodes of war and peace and chequered human relations broods the spirit of righteousness (dharma) grounded in truth that ensures the victory of mortal man over destiny and death. The Rāmāyaṇa is a humane through heroic national epic, full to the brim of the milk of human kindness that is spilled on all sides over human and every sentient creature, and saturated with a profound love of nature and sense of the unity and continuity of life. It is the perennial main-spring in India of boundless love, compassion and self-effacement, of divine courage, fortitude and serenity in the face of human failings, conflicts and defeats. Every autumn the main episodes such as the meeting between the exiled Rāma and Bharata in the forest, the return of Rāma to Ayodhyā, the defeat of Rāvaṇa and the banishment of Sītā are acted as plays and pageants, while the worship of Devī by Rāma on the eve of the Battle of Laṅkā is commemorated by the autumnal festival of the Goddess throughout India.

The Myth of Agricultural Colonisation of the South

The story of the abduction of Sītā and her recovery by Rāma embodies a myth of agriculture and colonisation of the migrating

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Āryan people as they marched to fresh fields and pastures new. Sītā is not born of human parents but sprung from the furrow as Janaka, king of Mithilā, ploughed the field and hallowed it. She is a daughter of the earth-goddess and literally means furrow. Rāmachandra is the moon-god, who rules the world of vegetation, and wins Sītā by his exhibition of strength in bending the marvellous heavy bow given by the gods. The bow is the implement of the hunting stage of civilisation; and Rāma as he strung, bent and broke the bow that neither gods, nor asuras nor men could wield, ushered in the richer agricultural civilisation, under the inspiration of the Kshatriya sage, Viśvāmitra, now a Brahmarshi. The Rāmāyaṇa hides the story of Āryan advance to the South, with the aid of various indigenous peoples with monkey, bird and other animal totems. Such myths that have already become obsolete in a sophisticated, civilised age of magnificent cities with their high walls and deep moats indicate vestiges of a distant social history.

The Rakshasa and Vanara Tribes

The colonisation and settlement of the South could not proceed without a fierce struggle with the Rākshasas, hostile tribes which opposed Brāhmaṇical rituals and institutions. But in the struggle the Vānaras, representing another group of tribes, proved a valuable ally to the Indo-Āryan cause. The Rākshas or Rākshasas are mentioned by Pāṇini as a tribe along with the Parśus (Persians) and Asuras (Assyrians); while in respect of the Vānaras of Kishkindhā, D. R. Bhandarkar refers to an inscription that mentions a ruling family in Dharwār described as "of the Bali race", "lords of Kishkindhā," "best of towns" and "bearing the device of an ape (kapi) on their banner". Kishkindhā is modern Bellary in Bombay Presidency. One of the homes of the Rākshasas is Janasthāna in the Godāvarī valley. Their connection with Laṅkā suggests that they were a sea-going people, while the Purāṇic tradition indicates their descent from the royal line of Vaiśāli - Paulastya Rākshasas or cruel Brahma Rākshasas, as these were called. The Rākshasa culture of the South was in no way inferior to the Indo-Āryan culture of the North. As Rāmachandra leaves the Ganges valley he comes across, according to the Rāmāyaṇa, vast forests extending across the Vindhyas into the Dakshiṇāpatha with Brāhmaṇa ascetics

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living here and there in the region between Chitrakūṭa and the Pampā (tributary of the Tungabhadrā), whose rituals and sacrifices were hindered by the Rākshasas. Rāmachandra's chastisement of the Rākshasas, at the instance of the ascetics in the Daṇḍaka forest, brought about the intervention of their guardian and lord, Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā. To wreak his vengeance on Rāma he stole Sītā. South India in the Rāmāyaṇa is largely covered by the dense jungle of Daṇḍakāraṇya, and no civilisation is encountered before Rāmachandra reaches Kishkindhā which constitutes the intermediate bastion of Āryan civilisation. Rāmachandra and his consort and brother are probably deities of a certain Āryan Ikshvāku clan of Kośala that after some court intrigue in Ayodhyā, started out on a colonisation enterprise in Daksiṇāpatha, and having safeguarded against Dravidian depradations the sporadic colonies of Brāhmaṇas in the trackless forests south of the Vindhyas, reached as far as Laṅkā which it conquered from the Dravidian king with the assistance of the Vānara tribes. Both Rākshasas and Vānaras are names of actual tribes of South India. In the original Rāmāyaṇa, Laṅkā was a town, as pointed out by Jacobi. In Indian astronomy Laṅkā stands on the equator, where it is intersected by the meridian of Ujjayinī. The identification of Laṅkā with Ceylon came much later and is generally attributed to Buddhist sources. The alliance between the Princes of Kośala and the Dravidian Vānara tribes of Kishkindhā could be easily cemented because the former by marriage in the royal house of the Videhas of Mithilā went definitely against Brāhmaṇical orthodoxy, the kings of Magadha, where the Dravidian elements were dominant, being regarded as Śūdras in the Vedic period. Finally, Rāvaṇa, as Pargiter suggests, is a title of kings derived from the Tamil Iraivan. In the Purāṇas there is more than one Rāvaṇa or Dravidian prince. One of the Rāvaṇas was captured and imprisoned at Māhiṣmatī by Arjuna Kārtavīrya. In respect of the ten heads of the king of Laṅkā (Daśānana) the explanation may be that Rāvaṇa's personal Dravidian name when Sanskritised accounted for this monstrosity. Rāvaṇa is spoken of sometimes as having two arms and being otherwise beautiful, adept in the Vedas and devoted to Śiva.

The pioneer of Southern colonization, however, was not Rāmachandra, but Agastya who humbled the pride of the

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Vindhya and obtained the right of access to the South, including Jāva and Sumātrā. It is significant that the Indian Archipelago, comprising "the seven flourishing realms" of Yavadvīpa, Suvarṇadvīpa and Malayadvīpa, first finds mention in literature along with the Dakshiṇāpatha in the Rāmāyaṇa, (IV, 40, 36) and that Agastya is regarded as the patron saint of both South India and South-east Asia as Śiva-Guru. In Tinnevelly, there is Agastya's Hill, where the missionary saint finally retired as an anchorite after finishing his mission of Brāhmanising the South.

Traces of Early Economic History

Another significant fact is that like Kṛṣṇa of the Mahābhārata, Rāmachandra is described as dark and blue, the colour of the non-Āryan people, although both are incarnations of Vishṇu, the God of the blonde Āryans. Both the epics fuse present with past history. Rāma's conquest of Laṅkā under the guidance of Agastya, the Brāhmaṇic sage of Southern colonisation, who gave him the weapon and the mantra for over-powering Rāvaṇa in the final encounter, and the invaluable aid he obtained from hosts of Vānara tribes of the forests, where cannibals were also encountered, led by Hanūmān and Sugrīva, no doubt preserve the memory of a momentous phase of Indo-Āryan history.

Primitive races and peoples of the forests have their half-human, half-beastly guardians. The five chief monkeys on the mountain Riṣyamukha that saw Sītā being carried away by Rāvaṇa and Jaṭāyu, king of the eagle-tribes, and his brother Sampati are leaders of the less advanced early folks of the jungle, won over to Āryan friendship and co-operation. The alliance between Āryan Rāma and non-Āryan Sugrīva is cemented by Hanumān making fire in primitive fashion with two pieces of wood and passing sunwise round it. That the Ikshvāku princes played a leading role in the Āryan settlement of the far South is indicated by the Vāyu Purāṇa which mentions two Ikshvāku Princes, Aśmaka and Mulaka, living in the Dakshiṇāpatha. The capital of the former was Potana or Pauḍaṇya and that of the latter was Pratiṣṭhāna, according to Pālī literature. The Suttanipāta specifically mentions Bavarin, a Brāhmaṇ teacher of the king of Kośala, having settled in the territory of Aśaka (Aśmaka) on the Godāvarī, south of Paiṭhān (Pratishṭhāna). Ikṣhvāku

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kings find also prominent mention in the Nāgārjunīkoṇḍa and Jagayyapeta inscriptions of the South; they lived in the 3rd or 4th century A.D. But as the epic now stands the traces of early economic history that formed the nucleus of the Rāmāyaṇa are completely over-shadowed by heroic and elegant poetry and the inculcation of the Dharma of man that penetrates into every happening.

The Epic Deification of Man

It is remarkable that in both the epics Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are represented not as deities but as ideal men or super-men. The wicked Rāvaṇa obtained the boon from the Progenitor Brahmā that he cannot be slayed by either god or gandharva, yaksha or rākshasa. As Rāvaṇa oppressed the gods, the Supreme Being desired that he should be slayed by man. This is the mythical genesis of the humanity of Rāma. It is true that as the story unfolds, gods and sages stand before Rāma in reverence urging him to remember that he was the Supreme Being himself. But Rāmachandra seldom deviates from the position that he is nothing more and nothing less than man. In fact the stress of the Rāmāyaṇa is that of men becoming god-like or divine through discipline, self-restraint and the practice of Dharma that constitute the code of obligations of every man. There are episodes in the Rāmāyaṇa where Vālmīki indeed makes Rāma share the helplessness of every mortal before a superior enemy, as for instance, Indrajit. Vishṇu's vehicle, Garuḍa, rescues both Rāma and Lakshmaṇa from the peril and as he departs observes: "By nature the Rākshasas have cunning shifts in fight, whilst thou, who art heroic and of pure spirits, reliest on thy simplicity alone for strength. Thou should'st never trust these Rākshasas in the field of battle, for they are deceitful. And allow me to depart, O, Rāghava, and do thou entertain no curiosity, as to our friendship." Garuḍa, who is the servant of Vishṇu yet leaves Rāma, who does not recollect nor takes advantage of his incarnation, after assuring him succour in need. Similarly Kṛṣṇa of the Mahābhārata is not the deity but the ideal man, seer and friend, and though now and then he slaughters demons, slays the king of the snakes, kills Kaṁsa and Hiraṇyakaṣyapa, the stress is always on the human rather than the divine attributes. Kṛṣṇa himself says in the epic: "Whatever

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I shall accomplish is due to my own will and power (puruṣakāra), nothing which is in any manner divine I can undertake". But Kṛṣṇa worship is established and promulgated in the Mahābhārata; and there is no more dramatic scene in the epic than the one in which Śiśupāla grudges Kṛṣṇa the chief rank and precedence in the coronation sacrifice of Yudhiṣṭhira, angrily protesting that he is neither a ruling monarch nor a Brāhmaṇ seer or teacher, and summons him to battle until Kṛṣṇa, for a long time forbearing and serene, kills him to the relief of the entire assembly.

There is a mythopœic descent of the gods in the epics—both Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are incarnations (avatāras) of Vishṇu, the beneficent deity who rescues mankind through his rebirths from age to age whenever righteousness is overpowered by unrighteousness. But, as in the Rāmāyaṇa, so in the Mahābhārata, the divine incarnation is laid aside and Rāmachandra and Kṛṣṇa are presented as god-man, ideal man or super-man. The epics have captured the mind and soul of India because they revere along with the Supreme Being Nārāyaṇa, the Superman or the ideal man (Narottama) as well as the common man (Nara). "This is the holy mystery," unequivocally asserts the Mahābhārata, "there is nothing nobler than humanity." Man, absolutely every common man, is God.

The Rise of Krishna-Bhagavatism as Reform Movement

The Mahābhārata strikes a significant contemporary note as it gives a symbolical meaning to sacrificial offerings against which Asceticism, Jainism and Buddhism launched their emphatic protest. The delineation of the exploits of the Pāṇḍavas led by Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra, later on apotheosised into Nara and Nārāyaṇa, in the annals of the Bharatas (Bhāratī-kathā) sung in Ayodhyā, Naimiṣāraṇya and Hastināpura developed into the scripture of the Bhāgavata cult what the epic really is. Devakīputra Śrī Kṛṣṇa of Mathurā must have been an outstanding spiritual leader, seer and reformer, who preached a theistic faith stressing the almighty, worshipful (Bhagavān) character of the deity before the time of the Buddha. The image of Herakles that Quintus Curtius mentions as being carried in front of the army of Poros arrayed against Alexander's forces was that of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the worship of the "Indian Herakles" being

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associated with the Śūrasenas and the city of Mathurā. There were three outstanding features of this new cult that from the fifth to the first century B.C. was developing an all-India importance. Pāṇini refers to Vāsudevakas and Arjunakas, cults of worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, and an Udaipur inscription of the second century B.C. mentions the worship of Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva; while Patañjali who lived about the same time quotes a sentence, "May the power of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, accompanied by Saṁkarṣaṇa, increase," and also refers to the dramatic recitals of Kaṁsavadha and Bālivadha. The same sect was also early known as the Ārya Sātvata sect, practising a special type of yoga meditation of Vāmadeva according to the four-fold nature of the Divine. According to Yamunācarya, those who worship the Supreme God in purity of spirit are called Sātvatas and Bhāgavatas.

First, the new religion vies with Buddhism in replacing the ancient sacrifice of animals by the sacrifice of the desires and passions of life establishing a profound serenity of self. The Mahābhārata observes: "Engaged in the sacrifice of peace, possessed of self-control and employed also in the sacrifice of Brahman, the sacrifices I shall perform are those of speech, mind and deed. How can one like me celebrate an animal sacrifice which is full of cruelty? How can one endowed with wisdom perform, like a ghoul, a sacrifice of destruction after the manner of the Kshatriyas—a sacrifice which brings only transitory rewards? I am born of my own self, O father, and without progeny I shall seek my own spiritual welfare. I shall offer the sacrifice of self, I require no children to buy my saviours." "No animal should be sacrificed in the Kṛta age", we read in the Śāntiparva of the epic. In another place the epic speaking of the merit of Vaishṇavism, mentions the performance of a horse sacrificial rite in which, however, no animal is killed. The emphasis of a simple, compassionate code of morality in the epic is also an answer to the Buddhist call to the law of altruism, to the noble eightfold Āryan path. When Kṛṣṇa says in the Mahābhārata, "Know that Dharma is my beloved, first-born mental son, whose nature is to have compassion on all creatures. In his character I exist among men, both present and past, through many varieties and forms of existence for the preservation and establishment of righteousness," the epic effects a striking reconciliation between the Buddhist

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law of compassion and the new Bhāgavata faith and incarnation and immanence of the deity. It is significant that the simple, basic principles in which dharma is epitomised in the Mahābhārata are inscribed in the Garuḍa column of Heliodorus, the Greek convert to Bhāgavatism, in the second century B.C. at Besnagar near ancient Vidiśā, the capital of the Śuṅgas. "Three immortal precepts, when practised will lead to Heaven—self-restraint, renunciation and vigilance." The very words of the epic are repeated in the column.

The Stress of the Immanence of Deity

The second fundamental principle of Bhāgavatism embodied in the Mahābhārata is its re-interpretation of Dharma from both the metaphysical and moral side. Dharma as the primordial norm, sustaining the universe in Ṛgvedic and Buddhist thought and underlying and harmonising all differences, becomes transformed in the Mahābhārata into the realisation of the immanence of the deity. Dharma's eternal root principle becomes the knowledge that the Supreme Deity dwells in the hearts of all living beings. God, says Kṛṣṇa in the Aśvamedha Parva, takes his birth and lives among men in his infinite love for man. The incarnation of the divine is for the good of mankind (Jagatāṃ upakārakaṃ).

The third principle flows from the second, viz., the divinity of Man. This is the kernel of the teaching of the Mahābhārata. In the Bhagavad-gītā as Kṛṣṇa unfolds to Arjuna's wondering gaze his Universal Form, all-creating and all-devouring, gracious and terrible, transcendent and immanent, the latter is struck with both ecstasy and terror. God, who is impersonal and transcendental, then assumes his gracious human form (mānuṣaṃ rūpaṃ). Arjuna now obtains his bearings and is himself again. The transformation of the historical Kṛṣṇa, the seer and friend of Arjuna, into the deity is nothing new in India. For, according to the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad, "the worshipper becomes one with the god he truly sees". Thus formerly had the sage Vāmadeva, after realising the Supreme Truth, felt, "I am Manu, I am Sūrya"; and Indra himself said, "I am Prāṇa, I am the conscious self. Know me and worship me as life and as breath." Besides, the doctrine of the descent of God (avatāra) that found its first dramatic formulation in the fourth chapter of the Bhagavad-

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gītā facilitated the identification of the historical individual with the Absolute, which "though eternal and immutable in essence passes through many births for the good of mankind." The apotheosis of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva is completed when he is called Keśava or Lord of Brahmā (Ka) and Śiva (Īśa) in the Mahābhārata, and Govinda or Lord of Indra in the Harivaṁśa. The Bhagavad-gītā clenches the point by observing that the worship of Kṛṣṇa leads to Brahma-bhāva and salvation. The Mahābhārata finds and proclaims the Deity intimate, visible, human and personal. God in the Mahābhārata is the Mother, Father, Friend or Beloved, the counsellor, friend and guide of the Pāṇḍavas in their war of righteousness—the Battle of Bhārata—the protector of the honour of outraged Draupadī, the call of conscience for Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Droṇa on the eve of the great battle and the protective father of the forlorn Vṛṣṇi women of Dvārakā.

Besides Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva is the ruler of Mathurā and Dwārakā, the Saṁghamukhya (president) of the confederation of the republican tribes, the Vṛṣṇis, Yādavas, Andhakas, Kukuras and Bhojas which he saves from internal disruption due to the party politics of Babhru, Ugrasena, Āhuka, and Akrūra, the political seer, prophet and builder of United India, the Pāṇḍavan empire (Mahābhārata) held by Yudhiṣṭhira for about thirty-six years. The epic has lost definite recollections of the great migrations and settlements of the Ṛgvedic Āryans. In the Vedic literature we find the Ganges-Jamunā Doāb occupied by the Kuru-Pāncālas of whom the Bharatas were the leading tribe. The epic takes up as its focus of interest, the northern Doab for which rival Āryan clans fight: the tribes of Southern Madhyadeśa, the Pāncālas and the Sṛñjayas against the Kurus. It has utilised tales and lays, referred also in some Upanishads and Brāhmaṇas relating to the hostility between the Sṛñjayas and the Kurus and the downfall and expulsion of the latter from the "Field of the Kurus" (Kurukṣetra). The defeat of the Kurus and the establishment of paramount sovereignty of the Pāṇḍava kings under the aegis of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva at the Kuru capital of Hastināpura situated on the Ganges (Anugaṅgam Hāstinapuram, says Patañjali) are gloriously depicted. The scene of the Battle of Bhārata is laid near Thānesar not far from another ancient capital Indraprastha on the Jamunā (Indapatta or Indapattana,

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according to the Guttila and Mahā-sutasoma Jātakas) and the epic makes all the Kshatriya princes and people of ancient India from the Himālayas to the Dravidian states of the south and from Dvārakā to Kāmarūpa participate in both the battle and the imperial coronation ceremony. The Kuru-Pāñchāla country had long ago lost the political importance it had at the time of the Bharata warrior kings, but became instead the most celebrated seat of Brahmanical learning, humming with hermitages and parisads where the great bulk of literature of the Upanishads, the Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas was composed and Buddhism could never have any foothold. But the epic restores its political importance through the victory of the Pāndavas over their kinsmen and proclamation of the imperial suzerainty of Yudhiṣṭhira. The sacred land which was *par excellence* the cradle of Vedic learning and culture should be, in the eyes of the epic, the natural political focus of the empire of the Bharatas. The "Tale of the Victory" (Jayānāma Itihāsa) reflects the ideas and achievements of Mauryan imperialism. Historians find in the epic references not to Emperor Chandragupta Maurya but to the "unconquerable" Aśoka and to the Yavana overlord of the lower Indus valley and his compatriot, Dattamitra, possibly Demetrios of Śākala. Kṛṣṇa, the inspirer of the Rājasūya sacrifice of the Pāṇḍavas, was fully alive to the danger of foreign conquest and the need of political integration of vast numbers of kingdoms stretching from Badarī in the north, the hermitage of Nara-Nārāyaṇa, to Kanyā Kumārī in the extreme south. The superman of the epic is *par excellence* the builder of Bhāratavarṣa.

The Dominant Cult of Sri Krishna-Narayana

The Mahābhārata achieves a synthesis of the superhuman attributes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the seer and speaker of the Bhagavad Gītā, the counsellor of Emperor Yudhiṣṭhira, the prince of Mathurā and Dvārakā, the associate of the cowherds of Gokula or Vraja, the pastoral country, and the Puruṣottama of the Yogis. The non-Āryan folk elements in the Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Nārāyaṇa cult are fully revealed not only in Kṛṣṇa's name as Govinda, the god of the cowherds or "cow-finder," his association in early life with Baladeva or Halāyudha, the god of husbandmen, in his destruction of demons and many marvellous

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exploits such as the lifting of the Mount Govardhana (depicted in Gupta sculpture) to offset the devastation threatened by the Indo-Āryan God Indra in his wrath against the agricultural and pastoral folks, but also in his dark complexion, yellow apparel and the peacock feather in his headgear. Kṛṣṇa's non-Āryan filiation is shown by his marriage of the fair Chāṇḍāla girl Jambhavatī according to the Mahāṇmagga Jātaka. Jambhavatī later on became transformed in the Purāṇas into Jāmbavatī, the daughter of the King of Bears. But the Kṛṣṇa-Nārāyaṇa cult achieves a most significant religious synthesis between Indo-Āryan Vedic worship and the non-Āryan Dravidian pūjā. The Vedic sacrifices, the epic warns, are not for the aspirants after the highest. "Those who offer sacrifices to the various gods go to the gods, the worshippers of the manes go to the manes, and the worshippers of the elemental powers and spirits go to them. So my (Kṛṣṇa's) devotees will come to me." And the Kṛṣṇa cult gives the message of hope of deliverance to the non-Āryans by adding that not only the Vedic sacrifices (yajñas) ultimately reach the Lord alone through the Vedic path but the offering with devotion of a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water as in the non-Āryan ritual is also acceptable (The Bhagavad Gītā, 9, 25.25). According to Mark Collins 'pūjā' is a Dravidian word (Pu meaning flower, and gey meaning to do). S. K. Chatterji translates pūjā as flower ritual or puṣpā-karma which he contrasts with the Vedic fire oblation or paśu-karma. The cleansing of Vedic ritualism through the omission of animal slaughter and the four-fold metaphysical re-interpretation of sacrifices as daiva-yajña, jñāna yajña, saṁyama yajña and indriya yajña and the cleansing of the Dravidian pūjā ritualism through the emphasis of love and purity of heart are the great achievements of Śrī Kṛṣṇa of the epic. But the epic clearly indicates that the new dispensation was not accepted without serious opposition. Reinforcing the childhood legends of Kṛṣṇa as the slayer of Pūtanā, the epic here and there deifies the prophet of the new Bhāgavata cult, identifying him with Vishṇu-Nārāyaṇa of the Vedic religion and stresses religious bhakti in such dramatic incidents as the outraged Draupadī's cry to Śrī Kṛṣṇa for the protection of her honour and Bhīṣma's final absorption in Him. For the Mahābhārata above all expounds the doctrine of Bhakti which could rally round various sections of orthodox Brāhmans

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and wean them from the heresies of Buddhism and Jainism. The Bhagavad-gītā, the Nārāyaṇīya, the Viśvopākhyāna and other parts of the Mahābhārata equally emphasise the conceptions of a personal deity, immanence, bhakti, reverence and grace. The Kṛṣṇa-cult has inspired some of the best examples of Gupta art in the form of images. Some of the earliest Kṛṣṇa images are those of the 4th century A.D. at Mandor, near Jodhpur, depicting beautiful Kṛṣṇa-scenes including the raising of Mount Govardhana. Near Udayagiri at Pāṭali there is a colossal Gupta relief (about 5th century A.D.) on the nativity of Kṛṣṇa lying by the side of Devakī, watched by five attendants. Reference may also be made to Kṛṣṇa-Nārāyaṇa placed by Skandagupta on the top of the Bhitari Lāṭ (about 460 A.D.) commemorating his victory over the Huns "which he reported to his mother who listened with tears of joy in her eyes, as Kṛṣṇa reported his victories to his mother Devakī". For the Imperial Guptas, fighting for the honour of the land and of Kula-Lakshmī that was being "shaken" and "overwhelmed" by the demoniac barbarians, Kṛṣṇa, "the slayer of Pūtanā", was the special object of devotion and worship. In the age of the Mahābhārata along with the Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatas other theistic cults, such as the Pāśupatas and the Śauras, worshipping Śiva and Sūrya respectively, arose. There were also worshippers of Skanda, Viśākhā, Vaiśravaṇa and Māṇibhadra. The more ancient folk deities such as Kuvera, the Nāgas and the Yakshas were also objects of devotion of the common people. Fissiparous religious trends were combated in the Mahābhārata by the doctrine that Vishṇu and Śiva are identical and that the Supreme Being is one, the Ordainer who lives in the heart of everybody. The Mahābhārata speaks of the Triune (Trimūrti) Creator in the manifestation of Brahmā, Preserver in that of Vishṇu and Destroyer in that of Śiva and also of Satya Nārāyaṇa as the one Supreme Being or Truth. Such are the attempts in the Mahābhārata to integrate a theistic faith with the earlier Upanishadic speculation, and rehabilitate Brāhmaṇism after a few centuries of Ājīvika, Jain and Buddhist demolition of devas and emphasis of personal development as the aim of spiritual life.

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The Emphasis of a Universalist Morality in the Mahabharata

On the social side the Mahābhārata similarly combats the emphasis of asceticism in the new heresies, and finds no justification for persons abandoning their homes and families for the cloister of forests. Virtues can be achieved or lost in household and social life and relations. The true spirit of India is embodied in the following: "The householder (gṛhastha) shall have his life established in Brahman, shall pursue the eternal verities, and in all activities of life dedicate his works to Brahman". Thus the epic posits the doctrine of self-less action (niṣkāma karma) with a detachment of spirit. This, and not homelessness, opens the avenue to a virtuous and adequate life. Says the Mahābhārata, "Self-restraint, charity and vigilance—these are the three horses of Brahmaṇ. He who rides on the car of his soul, having yoked (three horses) with the help of reins of right behaviour, goes, O King, to the realm of Brahmaṇ, shaking off all fear of death. He who assures to all beings freedom from fear goes to the highest of regions, the blessed abode of Vishṇu".

Again, the Mahābhārata accepts the criticism of Buddhism against the emphasis of heredity, race or colour in the status system, and reiterates like the latter the ancient norm, the metaphysical principle of varṇa or social gradation according to spiritual status and moral responsibility. The epic stresses that the highest Sacrifices that man can undertake—the Śrāddha-yajñas, sacraments of devotion, are open to all including the Śūdras. "Even gods do not disdain to share the offerings of sacrifices of Śūdras when performed in such spirit. Therefore all the four varṇas are equal". Finally, the Mahābhārata is a compendium of the Indo-Āryan philosophies of state, law, morality, dharma and salvation, of ancient lore adjusted to the changing times and circumstances (yugadharma). The Śāntiparva gives a brilliant exposition of the duties of the king and of his relations to the various orders of the people, groups and institutions that have stood in good stead the monarchs of the later ages in the establishment of a sound polity. The King's ministers in the Mahābhārata comprised four Brāhmaṇas, eight Kshatriyas, twenty one Vaiśyas, three Śūdras and one Sūta—the

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inclusion of the latter being a recognition of the importance and dignity of the lower castes.

Parasikas, Hunas and Sakas

While not too apprehensive of, or intolerant towards, the hordes of outlandish Mlecchas or barbarians such as the Yavanas, Pahlavas, Hūṇas and Pārasīkas with their divergent customs, beliefs and ways of living, the epic is a challenge towards the realisation of the fundamental cultural and spiritual unity of Bhāratavarṣa and of political unification under a single suzerain. There is reference in the epic to the Yavana rule over Sauvīra or the lower Indus basin, and to another Yavana Prince Dattāmitra, sometimes identified with Demetrios. The epic prophesies that the Śakas and Yavanas will rule unrighteously in the evil age to come. Against such a national misfortune the Mahābhārata steels the heart of the people. It formulates a universalist code of dharma for all social classes and communities that serves as the strong enduring binder in a fluent racial and political scene. The Mahābhārata is the inspirer and builder of the unity of India amidst great, even baffling, diversity and complexity.

The Mahābhārata is a growth of centuries that saw not merely the influx of vast numbers of Yavanas, Hūṇas, Śakas and other foreigners and racial admixture (varṇasaṁkara), but also the spread of Āryan colonisation and settlement to the south beyond the Godāvarī and to the east beyond the Lauhitya or the Brahmaputra. The river hymn of the epic that replaced the ancient Ṛgvedic hymn clearly indicates the extension of the geographical horizon, and is even now repeated at the time of daily ablution: "O ye Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu, Kāverī, join ye in this ablution water". Yet the centre of Aryan civilization was still the western portion of the Middle-land. Even the imperial capital of the Mauryas, viz., Pāṭaliputra is not mentioned in the epic which refers, however to the more ancient capital of Girivraja where were kept in confinement many princes for slaughter "as mighty elephants are kept in mountain caves by the lion". There are many forests even in the Madhyadeśa that are mentioned, such as Khāṇḍavavana, the Kāmyakavana and the Dvaitavana. The burning of the Khāṇḍavavana in the valley of the Jamunā and the expulsion of the Nāgas with their ruler, Takṣaka, who had to take refuge in the hills, represent

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episodes where the Indo-Āryan and non-Āryan peoples met in bloody conflict. On the other hand, the marriage of Arjuna with Ulūpi, daughter of the Nāga king, Vāsukī, and of Bhīma with Hiḍimbī, daughter of a Rākshasa, represents a significant step towards racial assimilation of the two great peoples in the Jamunā Ganges basin.

The Mahabharata—an Epitome of the Indian Philosophy of Life

The Mahābhārata brings in old and ancient gods and religions and philosophical doctrines, now to scrutinise and reject, now to accommodate or reconcile. It is a repository of forgotten gods and heroes and of abandoned creeds and faiths. Yet it is a living embodiment of the new cult of Bhāgavatism and the philosophical doctrines of Bhakti and Karma—truly a Kṛṣṇa Veda, so significant for the social and religious history of the later ages—that from end to end of the moving drama interweave like warp and woof the tangled lives and fates of the various characters. The Mahābhārata epitomises the philosophy of life of India.

In spite of its eclecticism and assemblage of diverse social customs, moral doctrines and philosophical speculations, it remains for the people of India as a whole the enduring bed-rock on which their moral and spiritual values are rooted and practised; while the types of men and women it created such as Kṛṣṇa, Bhīma, Karṇa, Droṇa, Arjuna, Yudhiṣṭhira, Gāndhārī, Draupadī, Sāvitrī and Damayantī are some of the noblest that can be found in any civilization and are perennial living symbols and models of goodness, love and righteousness. It is the epic religion of Man, the conception of immanence of the deity in man, of Hari the Ordainer, Censor and Guide of all "sacrifices" of mind, speech and activity in every human heart (antaryāmī) that has been the fountain-head of the development of such heroic, tender, self-effacing and delicate personalities and of their "imitations" through the centuries. There is no blessing in which Indian womanhood rejoices more than this; 'Be like Sāvitrī and Damayantī'; no nobler exortation to Indian manhood than 'Act energetically like Arjuna responding to the call of his Divine charioteer (Pārtha-Sārathi)'; and no wiser counsel than "Pursue Truth and Justice like Yudhiṣṭhira, beloved of

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Dharma.' And yet the epic constitutes a profound appeal to the modern heart and conscience. The anger and indignation of Draupadī enslaved and outraged by the insolent Duryodhana, the voluntary blind-folding of Gāndhārī to share the perpetual disability of her royal husband's blindness, Karṇa's disobedience to his mother revealing to him the secret of his illegitimate birth on the eve of the Great Battle, Ambā's frustrated love and fierce resolve to wreak her vengeance not upon the King of the Śalyas but upon Bhīṣma, Bhīṣma's vow of celibacy to enable his father to marry the lady of his choice, his unfolding to Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna the secret of slaying him in battle and his poise as he lies on his bed of arrows watching for death on the turning of the sun to the north, and the strange procession of the dead Kaurava princes and troops issuing out in the night from the dark waters of the Ganges in their full might and majesty before Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī whose aching grief is lightened, Yudhiṣṭhira pleading before God not to cast off the devoted dog in his ascent to heaven and his preference of hell where his presence may sooth his kinsmen and comrades—these are a few typical episodes that are thoroughly modern in tone and spirit, and have the same stirring perennial interest as the great richly human creations of contemporary literature. It is the tender and broad humanity of the Mahābhārata that accounts for its universal appeal. No wonder that the legends of the Mahābhārata were carried beyond the Indian Ocean to Kambuja (Indo-China) in the 6th century A.D. and to Mongolia in the 7th century and translated into the vernacular in Java by the tenth century. Even without their social and religious context the stories of the Mahābhārata, recited and dramatised, still arouse enthusiasm among peoples in other lands.

The Mahabharata as the Focus of a National Renaissance

Yet the Mahābhārata is intended not only for the common man of India, whom it educates and exhorts through numerous soul-stirring, didactic and narrative episodes, and for the Kshatriya prince, whom it teaches the life of valour and art of government, but also for the man of contemplation. The Bhagavad-Gītā is really the core and epitome of the voluminous Mahābhārata, the concise formulation of the religious and practical principles of the epic into a system. It was the same ṛiṣi or

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poet who composed both. The epic is integrated out of various stuffs and strands; the itihāsa or saga of the Bharatas and the Kshatriya tribes and princes sung by the bards; the various moral and religious folk-tales of different regions and peoples of India; the tales of sacredness of the holy places of pilgrimage recited locally; the myths and legends of the Ṛiṣis oft repeated in their sylvan hermitages; the maxims and regulations derived from the current Purāṇas and Dharmaśāstras; and above all, the cult of Bhakti of the new Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism. On the whole there is a remarkable unity in the whole composition, inspite of the opinions of Winternitz and Hopkins, who miss the basic design in their emphasis of the juxtaposition of the narrative and the didactic, and judge the Indian cultural product from the norms derived from Homeric criticism. In India kāvya, painting and sculpture often have not pursued an exclusively æsthetic purpose, and the Mahābhārata should be regarded at once as a narrative and a Dharma-saṁhitā without imposing any limits on the Indian literary tradition or the creative genius of an Indian poet. Linguistically speaking, the epic establishes the supremacy of Sanskrit as the national language of India. Vittore Pisani observes in this connection: "It is the greatest exponent of a reaction to the use of Prākṛit in the literature out of strictly Brahmanical circles, and of the successful attempt to give to profane India an over-regional and national language."

The Mahābhārata is a rallying focus of the social and religious revival that ultimately culminates in the Gupta renaissance and imperialism. It is a defence of the Brāhmanical society and scheme of life of the Vedic pattern against the inundation of exotic ideals due to foreign infiltration, invasion and conquest, and the spread of the heresies of Jainism and Buddhism that were threatening to dissipate the whole cultural heritage. The Mahābhārata owes its power and popularity in India to two factors: first, it is the expounding of a new faith, an ardent and catholic neo-Hinduism that integrates the current metaphysical theories of the Sānkhya and the Vedānta with a mystical, theistic emphasis of the Supreme Being; and second, it is the epitome and compendium of the ancient essential traditions of the Divine society that were threatened by foreign infiltration and conquest. The Mahābhārata, cognizant of the egalatarian spirit of Jainism and Buddhism and their vehement protest against

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sacerdotalism and caste, reformulates the Vedic metaphysical ordering of Varṇa as well as the spiritual principle of fire rituals. In the epic the Vedic rituals and sacrifices are not rejected but invested with a new symbolic significance. The sacrifices now extolled are those of speech, mind and action. The more recent philosophical speculations of the Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta are reconciled with the sweeping current of Bhakti, the new religious manifestation assumed by Kṛṣṇa and Śiva-Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism. But the reconciliation is on the lines of the ancient mystical and philosophical tradition, as represented by the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad. The Brahmaṇ of the Upanishad and the Puruṣa of the Sāṅkhya become identical with Puruṣottama and Maheśa in the yoga of the Mahābhārata. Besides the Supreme Puruṣa, there are many Vedic and Purāṇic gods and goddesses, yakshas, nāgas, gandharvas and spirits of the woods and waters that receive allegiance in the Mahābhārata. But all derive their *raison d'etre* from the Supreme Cosmic Being, Brahman or Truth, who appears in myriad forms according to the level and stage of social and individual culture. And the Supreme Deity lives in the heart of man, eliciting his love, devotion and self-surrender. The resuscitation of the Divine society takes place in the Mahābhārata in the fervour of devotion to the personal deity, Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, which instils into the Indian man an undying faith in his inalienable spiritual destiny, and protects him against both the denationalisation by foreign influences and the disruptive monastic creed of the Buddha. Asceticism, renunciation and compassion that have become the basis of the religious reform of Jainism and Buddhism are not discounted, but given their place in a revised, flexible scheme of the duties and stages of Varṇāśrama and the reorientation of the heroic and moral traditions of the people. The withdrawal of the elite of the people to the monastery and the forest has been a national danger in an era of foreign invasion and subjugation. The Mahābhārata fights the battle against the foreigners as it sets forth the ideal of Srī Kṛṣṇa, the supreme man of action, the happy warrior for Dharma's sake to whom victory is assured (yato Kṛṣṇas tato dharma yato dharmastato jayaḥ). The epic sings the deeds of courage, enterprise and sacrifice of the Bharatas and other famous ancient kings and warriors in a manner and context calculated to invigorate the

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Indian nation in the grim fight against the hordes of the dangerous (dāruṇa) Śakas and Hūṇas that had invaded and conquered large parts of the Indus valley, Kāthiāwār and Mālwā. The composer of the Mahābhārata is at once a social reformer, a prophet of nationalism and a seer of a universal religion. The epic is a perennial reservoir of moral and spiritual strength and inspiration which has never failed the people of India in the crises of individual life and the vicissitudes of history.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE REVOLUTION IN BUDDHISM: THE MAHĀYĀNA MYTH OF UNIVERSAL LOVE AND SALVATION

Asoka and Kanishka as Imperial Protectors of Buddhism

The conversion of Mahārāja Rājātirāja Devaputra Kanishka to Buddhism was more momentous for the history of Buddhism and Asian culture than the conversion of Dharmāśoka. This happened in the first century A.D. when the Kushān kings conquered the whole of Northern India. The Kushāns formed a section of the Yue-chi nomads of Central Asia, who were driven from their territory by the Huns about 165 B.C. and occupied Bactria. Thence the Kushān section of the horde migrated and entered Gandhāra. The Kushāns gradually built up an extensive empire under Kadphises I, that included the Punjab and Sind, Northern Gujerat, and part of Central India. He was succeeded by Kadphises II who embraced Śaivaism and styled himself Maheśvara on his coins. Several scholars think that the conquest of Northern India by Kadphises II is commemorated by the so-called Śaka era of 78 A.D. Others attribute this to his successor Kanishka, who probably ruled from 120 to 162 A.D. at Purushapura or Peshawar. Kanishka's empire extended from Bactria, Gandhāra and Chinese Turkestan to Pāṭaliputra, and the monarch, according to one account, fought with the Emperor of China and compelled him to cede Khotan, Yarkand and Kāshghar on the southern caravan route to China and surrender certain hostages who were detained at Kanishka's capital in India. Kanishka had, indeed, built up a magnificent and rich empire, comprising congeries of peoples—Chinese, Indo-Greeks, Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Hindus—and attracting to itself the wealth of the then known civilized world by its trade and commerce, both by land and sea, that developed to an unprecedented extent. At his capital, he built a six hundred feet high wooden tower, enshrining certain Buddha relics, which was regarded as one of the wonders of the world. The pattern was that of Chinese pagoda crowned with an iron pinnacle that

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supported bronze umbrellas, emblematic of the universal sovereignty of Dharma. The architect was Agesilaos the Greek (Agesala).

The Rise of the Mahayana at the Kundalavana Gathering

But Kanishka's undying fame rests on his patronage of Buddhism. He was said to have been converted by Aśvaghoṣa, (about second century) a most eminent poet, dramatist and philosopher of the age, who hailed from Ayodhyā, and who was perhaps forcibly carried away to his court. He composed the well-known Buddhacarita and several Buddhist plays for the propagation of Buddhism. A fragment of the manuscript of one of these latter, dealing with the conversion of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, has been found in Turfan in Central Asia. I-Tsing (671-695 A.D.) mentions that the Buddhacarita "is widely read or sung throughout the five divisions of India and the countries of the Southern Sea". The kāvyas of Aśvaghoṣa have extolled Gautama the Super-man (agrapudgala) in the same manner as the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad Gītā have done Srī Kṛṣṇa the Divine Man (puruṣottama). Kanishka was much puzzled by the various heresies that had arisen in Buddhism since the time of Buddha himself, and following the example of Aśoka, whom he tried to emulate and who had called the First Buddhist Council about 240 B.C., convened the last general Buddhist Council at the Kuṇḍalavana Monastery in Jālandhar (Kashmir) under the presidency of Pārśva. Celebrated scholars such as Aśvaghoṣa, Vasumitra and Nāgārjuna participated in the deliberations of the Council that continued for six months. This Buddhist Council, which was attended by five hundred monks from all parts of India and codified the Buddhist canon according to the Sarvāstivāda school, marked a new phase in the development of Buddhism. According to Tāranāth, soon after Kanishka's Council some Hīnayānic monks attained 'anutpattikadharma-khānti' (belief in the non-origination of all things) and began to deliver Mahāyānic discourses. These monks hailed from Aṅga and Odivisa (Orissa) and were sought by the devotees residing in other parts of India. About this time, Tārānāth adds, there suddenly appeared in different directions persons seeking Mahāyānic teachings, and these began to be delivered by Āryāvalokiteśvara, Guhyapati, Manjuśrī, Maitreya and others.

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Mahāyāna, or the Great Vehicle, the name given to distinguish it from the primitive Buddhism, Hīnayāna or the Little Vehicle, thus emerged in the first century A.D. under the leadership and stimulus of a galaxy of teachers such as Pārśva, Aśvaghoṣa, Amṛta, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva.

The Rise of Buddha-Bhagavatism

Mahāyāna Buddhism constitutes the conquest by Hinduism of the heart and soul of the ancient simple creed of the Buddha after a long bitter struggle for about five centuries. The change in the intellectual and social climate that had been going on in India for several centuries ushered in this revolution in the history of Buddhism. The revolution was partly due to the emphasis of reverence (śraddhā), devotion (bhakti), self-surrender (śaraṇāgati) and worship that bore the marks of the age, and that were characteristic of the Vaishṇava Bhāgavatas, Pañcarātras and Śaiva Pāśupatas. The entire Buddhist world pinned its faith in the dictum: "I take refuge in the Buddha, in the Dharma and in the Saṅgha." But since the historical Buddha was dead and gone, the common men and women of India found their solace and inspiration in their passionate devotion and offerings before the symbols of the Buddha, such as the Foot-prints (pādukā), the Bodhi-tree, the Umbrella (rāja-chatra), the Wheel (dharma-cakra) or the Stūpa or again, as the Supernal Sun, the Pillar of Fire and the Tree of Life. Buddhist symbols elicited adoration and worship which transformed the austere, puritanic and rational Hīnayāna into a world religion of love, devotion and faith—Buddha-Bhāgavatism. When we see in the fine, early Sanchi fragment Devadatta's drunken elephant bending low and taking the dust from the feet of the Buddha, who benignantly places upon his head a lotus-hand, as the monks stand by with folded hands in deep wonder and reverence, and in the beautiful Amarāvatī relief (2nd century A.D.) the group of kneeling, worshipful women ardently supplicating before the footprints of the Buddha, we meet the ubiquitous elements of adoration (śaraṇāgati) and reverence (śraddhā) transforming the rational system of Gautama. The human founder of the religion no longer remained a matter of historic memory and imagination, but an eternal, benignant deity accompanied by his pantheon and host of saints. A rich

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and luxuriant mythology came into being, centred round the many existences and perfections of Gautama the Bodhisattva, who after his sojourn on the earth for the alleviation of world misery, had finally returned to the Tuṣita heaven. Besides the spiritual note of bhakti, there was also in Mahāyāna a return to the Hindu metaphysical idealist and illusionist (māyā) doctrine of the world process as contrasted with the Hīnayāna doctrine of delusion (moha) and ignorance (avijjā) to which the latter had attributed man's bondage in the fetters of saṁsāra. The Mahāyāna gave up the specificity of the individual's mind, bondage and salvation for the conception of a primordial world mind, and for the universality of his spiritual charity and nirvāṇa, and in doing so claimed that it returned to the Buddha's original teaching. A dynamic, universal altruism flowing from the Buddha-nature, the cultivation of the pāramitās of the Bodhisattva dedicated to the establishment of heaven on earth through the relief of suffering mankind, and a profound veneration for the Compassionate One became the leading characteristics of the new dispensation.

Myth in Art and Metaphysics

It was in this religious climate of ardent devotionalism and stress of the layman's approximation to the virtues of the Bodhisattva that about the beginning of the Christian era the image of the Buddha in human form that was no where discernible at Bhārhut, Sañchi and Bodh-Gayā first made its debut in Northern India. By the third year of the reign of the Kushān Emperor Kanishka the indigenous school of sculpture at Mathurā stereotyped the Buddha image, working on the plastic technique and pattern of the ancient ascetic as well as Yaksha figures of Parkham in the neighbourhood—objects of veneration for the common people. The execution of the Buddha image ushered in the golden age of Mathurā sculpture. And such was the fervent adoration the Buddha image elicited among the people that within a century of its first appearance the earlier vogue of representation of the Buddha through symbols completely disappeared. Sculpture and the new devotional outlook of Buddhism, focussed round the Master as the Great Healer and the Great Compassionate One and the Bodhisáttva with his numerous sacrifices for the alleviation of human suffering, aided each

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other. Even the practical eightfold Path of Morality (śīla) of early Buddhism came to be less significant for the masses than the redemptive love of the supra-human Buddha imaged in temples with all his bodily signs and gestures (Mahāpuruṣa-lakṣaṇa) that the sculptor now depicted in full detail. The patternised image of the Buddha that profoundly influenced the art and worship of the entire Buddhist world had since then shown the protuberance on the skull, dot between the eyebrows, elongated ears, webbed fingers and the symbol of the wheel on the palms and soles. Buddhist myth, art and metaphysics, all underwent a rapid and complete transformation in the first two centuries of this millennium.

The Mahayana Doctrine of the Great Compassion

In the evolution of Buddhism the Bodhisattva became gradually the magic word focussing the fervent adoration of man and the infinite, redemptive compassion of the deity. The original simple Buddhism was completely transcended by the metaphysical conception of the numerous Mortal or Mānuṣī Buddhas (viz. Kaśyapa, Vīpassi, Konagammana, Śākyamuni and Maitreya), Saviour Buddhas or Bodhisattvas (such as Padmapāṇi, Samantabhadra, Mañjusrī and Avalokiteśvara and metaphysical or Dhyanī Buddhas (such as Vairocana, Akṣobya, Ratna-sambhava, Amogha-siddha and Amitābha), representing different levels of spiritual existence and classes of saviour beings. Literature, painting and sculpture, all opened up new vistas for the worshipful Buddhist multitude. Both the schools of Gāndhāra and Mathurā vied with each other in producing elegant, poised and serene figures of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva along with sacred scenes from the Buddha's life and the Jātakas in great abundance in the first and second centuries for the common people of India, and gradually the Hellenistic elements of form and decoration hailing from the north-west were subordinated to Indian piety and devotion. From the very beginning the Mathurā image, working on the indigenous traditions of Yaksha, sometimes called Bhagavān, and the sentiments of folk devotion, indeed differentiated itself from the Gāndhāran type. The latter was Greco-Roman in its pattern, though modified by Indian norms and predilections, and was lifeless, crude and naturalistic from the Indian viewpoint. It yet contributed the well-nigh ubiquitous diaphanous robe to the rendering of the Buddha figure. But both the ancient folk belief, faith and imagination as well as

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the rise of the new philosophy and bhakti stressed the notion of the cult image. Mathurā loved to call and depict the Buddha as the Bodhisattva, and gradually Indianised Gāndhāran sculpture, that served the Buddhist order for as many as five centuries until it blossomed forth into a magnificent Gothic phase immediately before it was swept away by the tide of the Epthalite invasion. The ancient metaphysics of the land instilled a spiritual depth and passion into Buddhist sculptures through its doctrines of the immanence of the deity and the unity of all life, and above all the spirit of man's tender piety and self-surrender, be he saint or sinner. Such were also the dominating notes of both the Bhagavad-gītā and the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka in contemporary thought. The universe of the Buddhist under the influence of the Mahāyāna came to be filled in every nook and corner with the Bodhisattvas who answered the prayers of the faithful, and were anxious to transfer their own merit to the sinful, the ignorant and the suffering. "The Buddhas who have been, are, and will be, are more numerous than the grains of sand on the banks of the Ganges," observes the Aparimita-dhāraṇī. No longer were the followers of Dhamma to depend solely on their own effort for salvation. The Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva (who "looks down from high") even descends to hell for the salvation of sinners. The paths of morality and knowledge were not of course disregarded, but worship and devotion became more important for leading the faithful to the paradise where there were eternal worship and compassion, music and illumination.

The Doctrine of Avatara

Such a change that is rooted in the common psychology of all laymen and perhaps of most monks, was speeded up by the influx of vast numbers of the Śakas, Parthians, Kushans and other foreigners and the infiltration of new influences—Greek, Christian, Zoroastrian, Central Asian and Chinese—that created a unique favourable environment in Gāndhāra and Kashmir for a new ideological pattern. In Western Asia small bands of Christians were adoring Jesus as the Saviour of Mankind. There also arose at this time in India the doctrine of the descent of the gods (avatāra). This may have something to do with the impact of Zoroastrianism in which there are several incarnate manifestations of a deity called Verethraghna, and of Christianity, especially of Nestorianism, which

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had reached the borderlands of India before this time. Nor can we disregard the influence of the apotheosis of the Roman Emperor in the age of Augustus. In the imperial religion of the contemporary Roman world at the zenith of its power and prosperity, divine essence and power were attributed to the Emperor. Both his birth and childhood were sought to be associated with occult signs and miracles, while on the throne he was extolled and worshipped as the Saviour of the World, vouchsafing love and compassion to mankind. Such an ultra-mundane doctrine promising universal grace and redemption must have travelled from the Mediterranean through the Indo-Levantine route to Gāndhāra and North-west India. The doctrine of incarnation could be discerned almost simultaneously in Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism and it is significant that it was in Gāndhāra where the foreign influences were the strongest that the theory of the Bodhisattva incarnations dedicated to the Great Compassion seemed to have been first adopted by the Mahāyāna doctors.

The New Social and Intellectual Climate

It was the Mahā-sangika sect of Buddhism which first officially formulated the avatāra doctrine, but this rapidly spread to other sects of the Mahāyāna. Henceforth the historical Buddha recedes into the background; he is but a glimpse, a faint image of the real metaphysical Buddha reigning eternally in the Tusita heaven. The Buddha who is to descend to the earth is Maitreya and Amitābha. The former has filiation with the Brahmanical god, Mitra, sun and friend; and the latter is reminiscent of the Zoroastrian Sun-god. Both Buddhist theology and art invariably gravitated to the adoration not of Śākyamuni, but of the various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that bore a strong resemblance to the deities of Hindu worship and devotion. The sculpture of both Mathurā and Gāndhāra also introduced into the Buddhist pantheon worshipful Indra, Kuvera and Gandharvas, male and female, from the Hindu world to strengthen the new devotionalism of the Bodhisattvayāna.

For the Hindu world the Bhagavad-gītā reached a most remarkable synthesis of knowledge, yoga and devotion in Bhāgavatism and the worship of Puruṣottama and Kṛṣna-avatāra. Mahāyāna Buddhism is a species of the same Hindu genus, Bhāgavatism, in the contemporary Indian religious climate, introduced and popularised

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through the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka and the noble works of Aśvaghoṣa, who at the court of Kanishka in Purushapura wrote perhaps the earliest classical Sanskrit Kāvyas, anticipated the kāvyas and dramas of Bhāsa and Kālidāsa and produced certain remarkable ideal characters, corresponding to those of the Hindu epics, for the Buddhist world. Aśvaghoṣa is eloquent of the personal devotion or bhakti of the Śakyas to the Master. He uses the following epithets in respect of the Buddha—the great benefactor, compassionate like the parents, the puller of the dirt and stealer of sorrow from the seekers of the refuge (śokasya hartā śaraṇāgatānāṁ). It is probable that the Bhagavad-gītā influenced the corresponding principal Mahāyāna scripture, the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, and the devotional writings of Aśvaghoṣa, such as the Buddhacarita, the Sutrālaṁkāra and the Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda. These along with the Divyāvādāna, the Lalitavistāra, the Lankāvatāra-sūtra and the Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra comprise the major earliest texts of the Mahāyāna, all breathing universal aspects of human devotion, goodness and salvation.

The Rise into Importance of the Buddhist Laity

But the change can be attributed still more to the development of complexity in the early simple Buddhist creed which had assimilated all that it could from Brahmanism in the Ganges valley, but now had to reach out beyond the monastic, puritanical and restricted outlook of the Arhat of old for the fulfilment of the imperative, contemporary need of combining activity with renunciation and wisdom with love in a more spacious age and a more prosperous sophisticated urban civilisation at one of the junctions of the great routes of world commerce and cultural intercourse. The major innovation in the Buddhist world was the eclipse of monkhood and rise into importance of the laity. Has not the Buddha himself been a lay man and not a monk during all his previous births and heroic deeds of charity? With the new emphasis that the Buddhahood belongs to the laity, the religion of Śākyamuni issued forth from the monasteries to the fields, markets and cities. There was a sudden upsurge of spiritual life among the common people who were taught through the love of neighbour as oneself and the exercise of the familiar virtues of domestic life, sacrifice and compassion to prepare themselves for the heroic sacrifices giving them the status of Bodhisattvas in future births. The laity obviously could now

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aspire to the highest perfections of the future Buddhas. The all-merciful, ever-compassionate Bodhisattvas have come down to lead all creatures of the earth to the all-perfect illumination, goodness and beauty. It is this spiritual miracle wrought by the infinite tenderness and sublime charity of the Buddhist deities—Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya, Bhaiṣajyaguru, Kṣitigarbha and Mañjusrī—that answers a real longing of the human heart. Man's intellect also obtains supreme satisfaction from the Yogāchāra idealistic doctrine that neither the ego nor the world exists, but all melt in the Thusness (tathātā)—the transcendental Buddha in which the distinction between ego and non-ego, between saṁsāra and nirvāṇa fades away, and the multitude of beings finds integral, collective salvation. In the tathātā (absolute nature or vacuity of things) all contraries are reconciled and man penetrates into the final identity between the self and other, shedding the light of benevolence and compassion on humanity, "like a great sun from the summit of his heights". This was no small psychological revolution in India introducing or renewing a spirit of profound love, benevolence and sacrifice with a noble conception of the glory and moral grandeur of the average man.

Hīnayāna Buddhism already lost its hold on the people of India at the end of the last millennium with the revival of Brāhmanism in the form of Bhāgavatism that incidentally was prominent in the same area of foreign infiltration and influence in North-western and Western India which gave birth to the Mahayāna. But it is significant that as Buddhism became more "Brahmanised", it appealed to the more universal aspects of human wisdom and goodness; and for well-nigh six centuries the initiative in Indian thought definitely passed over into Buddhism. The social and economic conditions from Gujerat and Sind to Gandhāra and Kashmir were no doubt completely in favour of the creed overflowing the limits of the Order into the life of the common people that meant the reconciliation of prajñā with activity and of nirvāṇa with saṁsāra. In the Mahāyānist text Vimalakīrti-Niddeśa, we read that Vimalakīrti lives in the city of Vaiśalī as a simple layman, yet observing the pure monastic discipline; though living at home, yet never desirous of anything; though possessing a wife and children, always exercising pure virtues; though surrounded by his family, holding aloof from worldly pleasures; though using the jewelled ornaments of the world, yet adorned with spiritual

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splendour; though eating and drinking, yet enjoying the flavour of the rapture of meditation; though profiting by all professions, yet far above being absorbed by them; preaching the Law when among wealthy people; teaching the Kshatriyas patience; removing arrogance when among the Brāhmaṇs; teaching justice to the great ministers; teaching loyalty and filial piety to the prince; teaching honesty to the ladies of the court; persuading the masses to cherish virtue. The worldly life becomes in the Mahāyāna a veritable heaven for the Bodhisattva's spiritual illumination, unselfish teaching and compassion to fellow-men, including the sinners, debauches and outcastes. This overflow did not occur in the same measure in Hinduism. In the Bodhisattva-nāya Mahāyāna, compassion became the essence of the new interpretation, giving it a momentous impulsion that carried it beyond mountains, deserts and seas to distant lands and peoples.

Relations between the Mahayana and Hindu Metaphysics

The dialectic of the Sūttas in Buddhism was gradually replaced by a profound philosophy in the Mahāyāna which was also powerfully influenced by the contemporary metaphysical movements in Brāhmanism. This was facilitated by the fact that the leading Mahāyāna metaphysicians, Aśvaghoṣa and Nāgārjūna, were well trained in Brāhmanical thought and were, in fact, the leading intellectuals of India. The former was one of the founders of Samskṛta Kāvya, a celebrated musician and discoverer of a musical instrument and author of such distinguished Mahāyāna texts in Sanskrit as the Buddha-carita, the Sūtrālaṁkāra and the Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda. The Mahāyāna doctors gave an elegant, literary Sanskrit form to the Buddhist sūtras in order to make these easily acceptable for the elite, trained in classicism, as they incorporated Brahmanic metaphysical doctrines into the new interpretation. In the first place, the Mahāyāna doctrine abandoned its moorings in the Sāṁkhya system with its conception of the isolation and multiplicity of Puruṣas, pertaining to the nature of the windowless "monads" of Liebniz, but, stressed the psychic unity and interdependence of Being. Aśvaghoṣa developed what is described as the philosophy of Suchness (Tathātā). He puts it briefly as follows: In the soul we may distinguish two aspects. The one is the soul as Suchness, the other is the soul as birth and death. Each in itself constitutes all things, and both are so closely

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interrelated that one cannot be separated from the other. What is meant by the soul as Suchness, is the oneness of the totality of things, the great all-including whole, the quintessence of the doctrine—for the essential nature of the soul is uncreate and eternal. The above reminds us of the Akṣara and Kṣara soul of the Bhagavad-gītā. All things in their metaphysical origin come from the immortal Suchness, the Tathāgata-womb, the Ground, the eternal, universal Being or the Dharmakāya. But the Mahāyāna attributes to the transcendent Suchness both the effulgence of infinite wisdom and ardent infinite striving for the relief of world-misery. All the Buddhas, while at the stage of Suchness, feel a profound compassion (mahākaruṇā) for all beings and practise all the virtues (pāramitās) and many other meritorious deeds. They treat other beings as their own selves, and wish to work out the universal salvation of all humanity in ages to come, through limitless numbers of æons (kalpas). They recognise truthfully and adequately the principle of equality (samatā) among people, and do not cling to the individual existence of a sentient being. That is what is meant by the activity of the Tathāgata.

The Mahayana Doctrine of the Trikaya

There is no doubt that this interpretation of Buddhist doctrine follows the basic teaching of the Upaniṣads, and to the modern mind seems much more satisfactory than the Vedānta as interpreted by Śaṅkara. In the Mahāyāna the doctrine of the Trikāya or the Three Bodies or Manifestations of the Buddha is also fundamental. The three Manifestations are:—

(a) The Dharmakāya or Essence or Ideal Nature, undivided and common to all the Buddhas. This is the Absolute, the Transcendent or the Tathātā.

(b) The Sambhogakāya or the manifestation of Bliss, varying according to the planes of the different Buddhas. This is the superhuman body of Buddha, enjoying his bliss, wisdom and glory and as manifest in saints in the heaven, Gods or Īśvaras.

(c) The Nirmāṇakāya or the loving and serving human Buddhas in his incarnations. This is the assumed human body of the Absolute as manifest in imperfect beings.

The germs of the Trikāya doctrine are to be found in the Hīnayāna in the threefold conception of the self: (a) material possessing

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a form consisting of the four great elements, (b) spiritual enclosed within the former, and (c) formless and supernatural that embraces all the worlds (Dīgha Nikāya XVI, 3, 41-47). In the Nikāyas Buddha is often described as neither a man nor a god nor a gandharva nor a yaksha; he may live for a kalpa or part of it in his supernatural arūpa essence. The Tathāgata has his manomaya-rūpa which can appear or disappear and live for long and is dharma identified with Brahmā and the Ātmā, higher than arūpa beings. Thus the way is prepared for later Mahāyāna speculations in respect of the threefold body or manifestation of the Buddha. In the Trikāya doctrine again we see a metaphysical position similar to that of the Bhagavadgītā, the Dharmakāya corresponding to the Brahman, non-dual, eternal and unconditioned, the Sambhogakāya corresponding to the Lord or Īśvara, and the Nirmāṇakāya corresponding to every individual soul or the Avatāra immanent in every human being. But Mahāyāna theism, as embodied in the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, emphasises that it is only in appearance that there are three Manifestations, viz., that of the human being, that of the Pratyeka-Buddha and that of the Bodhisattva by means of which nirvāṇa can be attained. It is only by the compassion of the Buddha that all of them, as many as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, alike attain enlightenment and become Buddhas. Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity, Nestorianism and Manichæism, all probably have contributed towards the formulation of the Mahāyāna Buddhist theory of Trikāya for clarification of the relations between the Buddha-state and the world and the associated religious zeal for relief of world sorrow and belief in the divine grace of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas being shed on entire humanity. The Mahāyāna Trikāya dogma subtly integrates the notions of transcendence, incarnation and grace of the deity, and underlies the dynamic ideal of the Bodhisattva, bent compassionately over the pain and suffering of humanity, and directing it towards the Absolute.

The Parallelism between the Gita and Pundarika

In the Mahāyāna Buddhist world, the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka (beginning of the 3rd century A.D.) or the Lotus of the True Law has the same pre-eminence as the Bhāgavad-gītā in the Hindu world. It is accordingly the most extensively read Indian scripture which has given inspiration to millions of Buddhists in China, Japan,

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Central Asia and Southern Asia. As a matter of fact, it may be regarded as the fresh Buddhist rejoinder and challenge to Hinduism. The Gītā and the Puṇḍarīka are the gospels of Kṛṣṇa and Buddha-Bhāgavatism respectively, both equally saturated with bhakti as well as metaphysical idealism. Both expound that in spiritual life faith (śraddhā) comes before knowledge. The Gītā says: "He who has faith, perseverence in his quest and mastery over his senses gains knowledge and attains quickly the supreme peace". The Puṇḍarīka similarly teaches: "It is not only by reasoning that the Law is to be found; it is beyond the pale of reasoning, and must be learned from the Tathāgata". In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa, after explaining the inter-relations between the Brahman, the deity and the individual soul, provides for mankind a Messianic hope of deliverance through the Divine grace (prasāda). The Buddha in the Lotus of the True Law similarly proclaims both wisdom and love, and in a more decisively compassionate vein. "I am the Tathāgata, O ye gods and men, the Arhat, the perfectly Enlightened One; having reached the shore myself, I carry others to the shore; being free, I make free; being comforted, I comfort: being perfectly at rest, I lead others to rest. I shall refresh all beings whose bodies are withered, who are clogged to the triple world. I shall bring to felicity those that are pining away with toil, give them pleasure and final rest. The strength of compassion or kindness is my abode; the apparel of forbearance is my robe; and voidness or complete abstraction is my seat; let the preacher take his stand on this and preach." In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa declares to suffering, distracted humanity that "He has successive rebirths from age to age for the succour of the righteous, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of dharma". In the Lotus, the Buddha also declares that "He is repeatedly born into the world of living" for giving them final rest and deliverance.

The Messianic promise is indeed couched in words almost similar to those of the Gītā. We read again in the Puṇḍarīka; "When men become unbelieving, ignorant, fond of sensual pleasures, then I who know the course of the world declare, I am the Tathāgata, and I consider how I may incline them to enlightenment, how I may make them partakers of the Buddha Law." "Ye are my children, I am your Father, who has removed you from pain, from the triple world, from fear and danger when you had been burning

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for many koṭis of aeons." Both the Gītā and the Puṇḍarīka also lay stress not on homelessness and inaction but on detachment. The Gītā says: "Let not the fruits of action be thy motive, neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction." The Lotus observes: "Always try, unattached to suppress desire. It is an infallible means of deliverance; for by practising this method we shall become emancipated". The final message of the Gītā is: "Abandoning all supports, come to Me alone for refuge; fear not, for I will liberate thee from all sins". The Puṇḍarīka's final message is similar: "Hearken to me, ye hosts of gods and men: I am the Tathāgata who has no superior, who appears in this world to liberate. To thousands of koṭis of living creatures, I preach a pure and most bright Law that has but one scope, deliverance and rest."

'Buddhas Ye Shall become:' the Universality of Nirvana

In the new gospel, all sentient beings, "as numerous as the sands of the Ganges", even those who are low, immoral and wicked, shall become Buddhas and win their way to Nirvāṇa. For, as the Puṇḍarīka says, "There is but one Nirvāṇa, not two, not three"; and the universal illumination and compassion of their Leader, who is the Father of them, shall lead them all to this collective goal. The Puṇḍarīka, like the Gītā, leans on devotion to the Eternal Lord and Father, who is also sometimes called Nārāyaṇa, but is very much stronger in its emphasis of universal salvation for all living creatures. Nirvāṇa in the Mahāyāna is not annihilation but eternal life and activity. The Lord's body, says the Puṇḍarīka, has existed entire in thousands of millions of regions; during a number of millions of aeons beyond comprehension he has taught the Law to all the creatures. Knowing them to be perverted, infatuated and ignorant, the Lord teaches final rest, himself not being at rest. Infinite is the compassion of the Teacher of gods and men. "Buddhas ye shall become. Rejoice and be no longer doubtful or uncertain. I am the Father of you all". Just as the Mahāyāna rejects the doctrine of Nirvāṇa as personal final release and absolute extinction of life, it also gives a trans-human direction to the virtues (pāramitās) of the Hīnayāna. The Bodhisattva is a being, who having reached the "shore" voluntarily abstains from deliverance and rest, submits to an immeasurable cycle of births to save mankind, transferring (parivarta) his own meritorious deeds to others.

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In Asanga we read: "The Compassionate One suffers in considering that the world is pain. He suffers and takes pity. Pity for the wretched, pity for the wrathful, pity for the hot-tempered, pity for the heedless, pity for the servants of matter, pity for stubbornness in error". The desire, sin, ignorance and wretchedness of man are indeed the polluted, fertile soil of the blossoming of the Bodhisattva—the Refuge and the Liberator given over to the Great Compassion. The Mahāyāna is not at all satisfied with the personal salvation of each individual that was the goal of the Hīnayānists, often derisively described as "the Listeners" in the Mahāyāna texts. Now the laity prepares itself, thanks to the merciful intervention of the Bodhisattva who supersedes the notion of the unique Buddha, for an all-embracing omniscience and saintliness that unite all beings of the universe in an effable communion. Thus "for the human caravan which follows the path of life, greedy for happiness, behold the banquet of happiness prepared at which all comers may satisfy themselves". Mahāyāna morals is inseparably bound up with a metaphysics positing the identity of illumination with dynamic, all-pervasive and entire charity and compassion. Rarely in the history of world religion do philosophy, spiritual ecstasy and morality harness their combined resources for activating such sublime reverence, love and goodness among the humble folk as is inspired by the Mahāyāna thought: "To serve the creatures is to serve the Buddhas".

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CHAPTER XIV

THE BODHISATTVA ON THE ASIAN HIGHROADS

The Beyond-social Morality of the Mahayana

The influence of Buddhism on Asian life and thought was mainly due to the subtle blending of metaphysical and mystical speculation with transcendental moral idealism in the Mahāyāna. Mahāyāna ethics not merely confirmed but also strengthened and expanded the code of Pañca-śīlāni of the primitive Buddhist community. This was largely the out-come of the original doctrines and inner vision of a galaxy of poets and philosophers of the Buddhist Yogācāra and Mādhyamika schools that flourished in the early centuries of this millennium. Philosophy, poetry and art, all combined to reveal the glory of prajñāpāramita or perfection of wisdom of the Bodhisattva whose ardent passion for the relief of world sorrow now became the *raison d' etre* of Buddhism. The predominant emphasis was the association of sapience with charity. "The Bodhisattva"—the hero and saviour of the new gospel—"looks upon creatures, whom he thus serves by giving, as more beneficent than himself, telling himself that they are the framework of the all-perfect and insurpassable Illumination." With the rise and spread of the Mahāyāna doctrine, whose influence has been far greater on Asian culture than that of Hinduism, compassion or pity has indeed become the key-word in Asian ethics. In the Mahāyāna, transcendental idealism and beyond-social morality become inseparable. The transcendental illumination or pure knowledge, Āsanga observes, at once translates itself into all-loving kindness and all-compassion. The Bodhisattva's love of giving and sharing is insatiable. He is the Self-born, the Healer, the Protector of all creatures, who loves and serves creatures for the sake of love and service, on the basis of profound detachment and understanding that in Bodhi nothing dual exists, nor is any thought of the self and the world present. Nirvāṇa (enlightenment) and saṁsāra (the world of births and deaths) are in essence one (Yas saṁsārah tat nirvāṇaṁ), and so also are wisdom and sin (Yaḥ kleśas so bodhi). It is contrary to reason to imagine that the

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one lies outside the pale of the other, and, therefore, that we can attain enlightenment after we have annihiliated or escaped the world of births and deaths. "If we are not hampered by our confused subjectivity, this our worldly life is an activity of Nirvāṇa itself". "All sins are transformed into the constituents of enlightenment, the vicissitudes of saṁsāra transformed into the beatitudes of Nirvāṇa". Thus observes Vasubandhu. Similarly Āsaṅga writes: "In the transcendent sense there is no distinction between transmigration and nirvāṇa". The worldly life, though fleeting and unreal, is of deep import to the Bodhisattva. The Vimalakīrti Sūtra says: "Just as the lotus flowers do not grow on the dry land, but spring from the dark and watery mud, so is it with the heart of wisdom, bodhicitta. It is through passion and sin that the seeds and sprouts of Buddhahood are able to grow." In Asia, the moral ideal is the Enlightened, the Emancipated and the Compassionate Man. In Brahmanical culture the Sage (Muni) or the Emancipated One (Jīvanmukta) lives in profound detachment in the world, true to his vocation and compassionate to all. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, that lays a greater stress on altruism, the ideal man, the Bodhisattva, seeks enlightenment for the sake of the salvation of all other creatures and strives to reach this, first by infinite compassion for the creatures, and second, by mystical contemplation that gives him the supreme understanding of the unreality of self, non-self and all phenomena. The unreality of the self, non-self and the world is not at all inconsistent with the individual's moral responsibility. Buddhism, like Hinduism, accepts the dogma of transmigration and the law of karma. As the individual has his cycle of births, he carries with him into each birth the balance or disbalance of his previous existences and deeds with their inevitable compensation or expiation. Nāgārjuna, the founder of the Mādhyamika doctrine of the void, observes in his Suhṛllekha: "Exhibit morality (śīla), faultless and sublime, unmixed and spotless, for morality is the supporting ground of all eminence, as the earth is of the moving and immovable". Life, mind and śīla are all focussed towards fervent charity and goodness that facilitate the mystical insight. All the other "perfect virtues" (pāramitās) take care of themselves. Here the moral ideal, as stated in the Bodhicaryāvatāra, (The Path of Light) is—

"I desire to be protector to those who need protection,
A guide to those who wander in the desert,

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And a ship, a landing stage and a bridge,
To those who see the Shore,
A lamp to those who need a lamp,
A couch to those who need a couch,
A slave to all beings who need a slave".

The Active Virtues of the Bodhisattva

Compassion, pity or benevolence in Mahāyāna Buddhism is practised without any belief in the substantial reality of the "mendicant", the "alms" and the "donor". The three elements—thought, deed and object—completely disappear with the recognition of the nothingness of the ego (trikoṭipariśuddha-maitrī). Just as in Hindu Yoga, wisdom emerges after the total merging and disappearance of subject, object and knowledge relation in a transcendental consciousness, in Mahāyāna jhāna or yoga, it is the outcome of the same merging and disappearance of servitor, object and service in the non-dual Buddha Essence, "Vacuity" or Non-substantiality, the Plane of the Ideals (dharmadhatu). Yet the Bodhisattva harnesses all his spiritual resources for keeping his body and mind ever alert for service to creatures (vīrya). For this reason in particular the detailed analysis of the perfect virtues (pāramitās) and of the psychological background of their practice in the activistic career of the Bodhisattva, marked by ten distinct stages (bhūmis—each of which is characterised by the maturation of ten moral qualities), as described in the Mahāyānist texts, deserves the attention of Western ethicists.

The Bodhisattva's ways of wisdom, compassion and service converge in the Communion of the Universe in which millions of Buddhas from many worlds through immeasurable ages participate in universal illumination and salvation. Thus the Bodhisattva's salvation is far different from this selfish salvation of the few Pratyekas and Arhats. Not until all are saved can the Pilgrim be at peace. Compassion is the law of laws, eternal harmony. "Compassion speaks: Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?" Mahāyāna idealism in which were grounded the virtues or perfections (pāramitās) of Buddhahood for the relief of misery and ignorance of all sentient beings introduced a new ethics into the world, modern in its tone and grasp, that underlies the humanism, socialism, forbearance and goodwill of half of humanity in the East. To what extent charity

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and benevolence flowed from Mahāyāna doctrines will be evident from the following vow that the Buddhist layman takes, in the words of Śāntideva, "To serve the creatures is to serve the Buddhas, it is to realise my end, to eliminate pain from the world, it is the vow by which I bend myself! If the suffering of the many is to cease by the suffering of a single one, the latter must work it out of compassion for others and for himself". Mahāyāna Buddhism developed the doctrine of vicarious sufferring for the sin and ignorance of others, of the transference of merit and of the emancipation of mankind grounded in the metaphysical beliefs in the unity and interdependence of life, the nothingness of man's soul or ego and the universality and all-pervasiveness of the Buddha-nature.

The Positive Ethics of the Mahayana

The general criticism that Buddhism is negative, nihilistic and atheistic is one-sided and unfair. From the dialectic of void it is not negativism but something positive that emerges. Nāgārjuna observes: "If a man believes in the void, then he believes in all dharmas, mundane and supramundane. If he believes in the same, then he believes in the doctrine of emergence of all dharmas as effects from the combination of causal circumstances. If he believes in that, then he believes in the Four Noble Truths. If he believes in them, then he believes in emancipation". The ego and the world vanish, but there always remain in Buddhist thought man's transmigration and moral responsibility, carrying as he does the burden of his merits and demerits from birth to birth,—the endless cycle of saṁsâra and kleśa. Nāgārjuna, who is one of India's greatest intellectuals and one of the founders of the Mahāyāna, came from Vidarbha (Berar) and was a friend of the Sātavāhana at the end of the second or the beginning of the 3rd century A.D., but travelled widely throughout the country. He is the author of the Mādhyamika or the Middle Way, where he has developed the famous philosophy of Śūnyatā or void. In his use of the dialectic Nāgārjuna anticipates Hegel, in his uncompromising logic of negativism he forestalls Bradley, while in his stress of everything including idea, mind and self as relative and interdependent he marches abreast of modern physics and philosophy of science. I-tsing praises Nāgārjuna's Suhṛllekha (Letter to a Friend) very highly and mentions that in his day it was widely read and memorised in India. As early as the fifth century A. D. Kumārajīva translated

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Nāgārjūna's biography into Chinese. That Buddhism gives a positive direction to man's ethical life is clearly indicated by its classification of human aims and goals. Two are negative, viz., the prevention of the rise of sinful and unwholesome states of mind and the abandonment of those states if these have already sprung up. But after the above two kinds of cessation (nirodha) we have the positive aims of the inducement of new wholesome states of existance and of their augmentation, development and perfection. The above analysis given in the Dīgha-nikāya makes Man the only measure of himself. The Vedānta equates Man with Brāhmaṇ, the Absolute or the Supreme Self. Buddhism equates Man with his own Becoming or Perfection, the apotheosis of the Pāramitās. If Brahmanical thought has stood for a social organisation, which is in conformity with the equilibrium of the cosmos, and identifies Dharma as the cosmic binding order, the eternal Truth holding its sway over the universe (Ṛta) and integrating and holding it together (dhāranāt dharmamityāhuḥ), Buddhism has stood for an ideal scheme of moral and social relations grounded on a discernment of the eternal, orderly sequence of things, internal and external, and of Man's own role in it.

The Mahayana more Dynamic than the Vedanta

In the emphasis of human goodness, dignity and perfection, Buddhism interprets Dharma practice as the Law of Altruism, complete, balanced and positive, as embodied in the Eight-fold Path and based on the laws of unity, continuity, metempsychosis and transience. The Buddha conceived that the accumulation of sins of karma through æons of years could be extinguished in a moment through a realization by the mind of its own rôle in the universe. Nor can such philosophy of human majesty and dignity and mystical self-dedication to the world and augmentation of altruism for the relief of collective misery be dismissed as sceptical, unreligious or irreligious. Man in Buddhism is "a lamp unto himself"; he holds to the truth within himself as to the only lamp and illumines and saves the world as well. For this Buddhism prescribes elaborate sets of exercises of meditation. Buddhism has its own articles of faith, its miracles of illumination, wisdom and sacrifice and its own levels and vistas of mystical experiences. It also inculcates devotion and faith (śaraṇāgati), surrender to the Tathāgata, who shows the Way. "As the gods worship Indra, so should one

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worship the man from whom he learns the Norm. The teacher, being honoured, pleased there at, from his deep knowledge doth expound the Norm", says the Sutta-nipāta. Again, in the Dhammapada, we read, "Whosoever seeks refuge in the Buddha, the Doctrine, and the Order, and with correct understanding visualises the Four Noble Truths—this is a secure resort, this is the safest refuge (śaraṇa). By taking such refuge a man is freed from all pain". The above sentiments constitute the core of early Buddhist faith and devotion that are inconsistent with scepticism. Buddhism could not have succeeded as a mere rational creed or an ethical movement without its beyond-human attitude, conquering and rising above life, mind and the world. Even its all-pervasive sweep of compassion, pity and service is grounded on what is really a mystical experience of the identity of the human self and the other or the unsubstantiality of both the human self (anātmānam) and the world. The Mahāyāna and the Vedānta equally identify morality and enlightenment and vice with ignorance. In the Vedānta the fullness or non-duality of Self, the abolition of the empirical self and saṁsāra is both the condition and summit. The Mahāyāna, like the Vedānta, is not sceptical at all, but unlike the Vedānta, the Mahāyāna introduces into the Absolute, Suchness or the Buddha nature, dwelling in every being, a kind of compassion beyond men and things. The pure Suchness or Thatness (Tathatā) which is inherent in every man "perfumes", in the words of Aśvaghoṣa, and protects him by its infinite love (maitrī) and compassion (karuṇā) and leads him to the understanding of Suchness and of the absolute oneness (samatā) of the universe and the way of morality. Such is the activism of the transcendent Suchness, the quintessence at once of the ultimate intelligence and the profound compassion (mahākaruṇā). Thus Buddhism, more than the Vedānta, makes the Enlightened One also the "Great Compassionate One", and directs the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas back from their own self-culture and blissfulness to the path of infinite love and service through infinite numbers of aeons. Representing a total awareness of the self, the not-self and the world and viewing society and its institutions solely from a logical viewpoint, Buddhism was more dynamic than the Vedānta in its philosophical outlook and much stronger in its rejection of sacerdotalism, caste and superstition in its social ideal.

Buddhism inculcated not merely the spirit of active compassion, sacrifice and sharing but also moral courage (vīrya) in driving out

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all fears and superstitions and in pursuing an alert, vigorous, dynamic life of sharing and service to sentient creatures. It repudiated the theory of caste stratification based on heredity, wealth and colour as well as the theory of the divine origin of kingship. It upheld a contractual theory of the origin of state and society as human institutions. These are founded in human consensus (mahājana sammati). Springing from the bosom of democratic republican communities of the sub-Himālayan region, Buddhism, however, picked up no quarrel with the new Mauryan monarchy and imperialism. On the other hand, its emphasis of the moral role of states and governments led to the development of the later Mauryan ideal and policy of Dharma-vijaya that enabled Aśoka and Kanishka to establish for the first time a Greater India beyond the confines of the country.

Causes of the Spread of the New Gospel

The spread of Buddhism or Dharmavijaya abroad was easy and quick for several reasons. First, Buddhism, on the whole weighed the scale against dogmas and creeds and for principles of piety and good conduct (śīla) and was accordingly a civilizing gospel like Christianity. From its early phase Buddhism was saturated with a profound love of man and inalienable benevolence and compassion that had great practical consequences for the amelioration of the masses. In the later phase of Buddhism this fine ethical quality of disinterested and universal magnanimity received unique stress, leading to the ideal and practice of all-pervading altruism and sharing getting better of self-salvation and world flight.

Secondly, Buddhism emphasised that the principles of morality, comfort and happiness of man could only be augmented and spread among the people by a progressive state rather than by sects and schools of philosophy. Like Christianity, Buddhism did not aim at rejection but fulfilment of the law, but unlike it, it upheld the positive doctrine of the active rôle of the state as the builder of the cultural and moral order. The Buddha in his discourses often drew a parallelism between the secular monarch bent on establishing the empire of righteousness and the spiritual monarch, both being enlightened, perfect persons. The umbrella is the Buddhist symbol of suzerainty of both types of mahāpuruṣa. Like the spiritual monarch—the Bodhisattva—it is the King or the King Emperor, who could initiate a new moral and spiritual culture,

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and disseminate among a congeries of subject races and peoples nobler ideals of conduct for their enduring happiness (rāja-dharma-pravartakāḥ). Thus Buddhism moralised politics and the state. Mauryan and Kushan imperialism obtained its new spiritual mission in backward and foreign countries from the Buddhist positive ideal of Dharmavijaya, enjoined upon a universal monarchy.

Thirdly, in dealing with popular customs, rituals and observances Buddhism adopted a policy of tolerance and forbearance, such as the Mahābhārata laid down in connection with the colonisation of new territories. But Buddhism widened the scope of this liberal policy by enunciating the principle that popular customs and traditions should be sought to be transformed by setting forth the superiority of other customs and traditions on the basis of a careful-comparative study and appreciation of the divergent viewpoints of social culture. Mahāyāna adaptation to new faiths and cults was no doubt facilitated by its rich imagery and symbolism as varied expressions of the dynamic Buddha-nature and also of the states of consciousness, its spirit of social idealism and tolerance and the replacement of the ideal of the austere arhat by the godly householder. On the other hand, the Mahāyāna was itself transformed as it won the acceptance of new peoples and cultures which contributed to its development.

Fourthly, the transformation from the early, simple and rational Hīnayāna to the later complex, devotional and ecclesiastical Mahāyāna, with its galaxy of gods and śaktis, saints and angels as objects of worship, its eternal Buddhakhetta, Tuṣita and Sukhāvatī paradises of Maitreya, Amitābha and numerous other sanctified, adoring Bodhisattvas and its soul-stirring legends of miracles wrought by saints in the name of salvation, satisfied the social and religious affections of the less advanced peoples in new lands. Conversion to Buddhism was also powerfully aided by Mahāyāna Buddhist sculpture and fresco-painting that depicted the paradises of the Buddhas as well as innumerable Bodhisattvas, angels, apsaras and saints, stimulating the faith and giving hope and assurance to the faithful. Mahāyāna metaphysics, miracle and art, all fed both intellect and imagination. Mahāyāna image and ritual, dramatisation and allegory substituted and metamorphosed popular rites and forms of worship of foreign races and peoples without detriment to central Buddhist dogmas and doctrines. Thus the

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Mahāyāna could launch upon a successful career of foreign 'dig-vijaya'.

Fifthly, the Buddhist view of life contributed in India towards the abolition of slavery and the establishment of principles of Daṇḍa-samatā (equality of punishment) and Vyavahāra-samatā (equality in law-suits). It clarified the rights and duties of the Buddhist laity on the principles of reciprocity and thus paved the way for an equality of private rights of persons, not excluding even foreigners. Buddhism thus definitely contributed towards improvement of the moral tone of society. Sixthly, the establishment of hospitals, rest-houses, animal houses, watering sheds for men and beasts and other humanitarian institutions spread goodwill, humaneness and altruism all round, and improved manners, rules of propriety and decorum and laws of the land everywhere.

Finally, Buddhism advocated education among the masses and established several cosmopolitan universities, such as Nālandā, Taxilā, Valabhī, Vikramaśilā, Anurādhapura and Śrī-Vijaya where the major contemporary creeds, cults and dogmas were carefully studied, and their attitudes thoroughly appreciated and where special instruction was imparted in medical science, chemistry and the various practical arts and crafts in order to enable monks, scholars and pupils to undertake successfully their grand mission of serving the lowly, the oppressed and the disinherited in society everywhere. The keynote of the cosmopolitan Buddhist universities was freedom of thought and discussion. This was an article of Buddhist faith which warned all men not to accept anything as reasonable and good on mere study of books of authority or because of its logical argument and nice formulation, or because it is reached after careful meditation and going through much penance, or because after all it comes from one's own accredited teacher, in the words of the Anguttara. It was the Buddhist universities that through their mutual forbearance, tolerance and respect for one another's doctrines and freedom of discussion, teaching and promulgation that made Buddhism a universal religion, and gave to the world, for the first time, the ideal of co-operation of all faiths for a true understanding of the essentials (sārabodhi).

On the other hand, nothing has contributed more to the extinction of Buddhism in India than the destruction of large Buddhist monasteries, first by the iconoclastic Ephthalite Huns, who sacked and devastated the Buddhist monasteries and art workshops

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of Gāndhāra and Uddiyāna, and then by the Turko-Afghans who destroyed the monasteries and workshops of Bihar and Bengal. As Hiuen-Tsang visited Gāndhāra in 630 A.D., a century after the invasion of the Huns led by the Attila of India, Mihiragula, he sadly lamented on the destruction of the brilliant civilization of Gāndhāra and Uddiyāna thus: "The royal race (in Puṣkalāvatī) is wiped out and the country has been annexed to the Kingdoms of Kapiśa. Towns and villages are almost empty and abandoned, and only a few inhabitants are seen in the country. One corner of the royal tower (Peshawar) contains about a thousand families ..... There are a million Buddhist monasteries which are in ruins and deserted. They are overgrown with weeds and they make only a mournful solitude. The majority of the stūpas are also in ruins". In Uddiyāna, the present Swat valley, "there were formerly fourteen hundred Buddhist monasteries which contained eighteen thousand monks; now they are almost abandoned or the number of their inhabitants is greatly reduced". Seldom has barbarian iconoclasm worked havoc on such a terrible scale on a civilization, fresh, beautiful, and rich in its promise as in Bactria, Gāndhāra, Uddiyāna, Kashmir and the Punjab in the 5th century A.D.

The Second Holy Land of the Buddhists—Cosmopolitan Gandhara

Mahāyāna Buddhism came to flower in the first century A.D., in the north-west of an expanded Indian world that established intimate trade contacts with Central Asia, China, Asia Minor, Egypt, Greece and Rome and welcomed and assimilated Hellenistic, Semitic, Iranian and Chinese currents of culture. With its highly devotional, ceremonious and ecclesiastical character and the ethical impulsion of its doctrine of universal salvation of all living beings on the earth, a salvation vouchsafed by the Divine grace of innumerable Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the Mahāyāna became a dynamic missionary world-religion, and started on its long and fateful treks and voyages on the roads of the Asian continent. Stcherbatsky observes: "The history of religions has scarcely witnessed such a break between new and old within the pale of what nevertheless continues to claim common descent from the same religious founder". The spread of Buddhism into Asia would not have been, however, possible but for this extraordinary metamorphosis. The source of the upsurge, teaching and spread of the new dispensation

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was cosmopolitan Gāndhāra, Kashmir and the Punjab, the outer fringe of the expanded, heterogenous, fluent Indian world, that saw for about five centuries an unparalleled religious enthusiasm in the construction of a thousand stūpas, chapels and monasteries with images of the dhyānī Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that gradually transformed the north-west into another Buddhist holy land. Even the common people in distant Khotan had small stūpas of their own in thousands with icons receiving their daily devout worship. This is the testimony of Fa-Hien, who in the beginning of the 5th century found in Gāndhāra and the Punjab numerous large monasteries accommodating many thousands of monks of both the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna schools. Many sacred relics found their way from the holy land of the Ganges and were enshrined in stūpas built for the purpose of bestowing health, peace and honour to princes and peoples; and legends were created about the transport of the Buddha himself to this region for working miracles, and certain north-western sites came to be associated with famous episodes in the lives of the Bodhisattva. In Puṣkalāvatī (Peshawar) Aśoka built a colossal stūpa at the site, where the Buddha in a previous life had made "the gift of his eyes", and Kanishka at the spot where four of the Buddhas of the previous existences sat under the pipal tree. It was here that the latter also built the celebrated stūpa and tower filled with the sacred relics. Buddha's alms-bowl was also here enshrined in a stūpa and a monastery, as found by Fa-Hien, until after many vicissitudes it was taken to Iran. Similarly the legends of Hārīti and Vessantara had also their locations sanctified by stūpas in Puṣkalāvatī, as the legends of "the gift of the body" to the tigress and of flesh to the falcon were celebrated by stūpas in the province of Uddiyāna. In Takṣaśilā (Taxilā), the Emperor Aśoka erected a stūpa on the site where the Buddha in one of his previous existences made "the gift of his head". North-west of Taxilā on the right bank of the Indus, another stūpa was erected on the spot where in one of his previous existences Buddha made "the gift of the body" to the hungry tigress. Sungyan mentioned in about 520 A.D. that the sounds of the Buddhist bells were heard during the whole night and filled the valleys in Uddiyāna. Kashmir was also the home of an intense Buddhist faith with stupas built by Asoka and Kanishka. It seemed that the peace and serenity of the groves of Bodh-Gayā, Sāraṇāth and Srāvastī came to be

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permanently settled on the rugged landscape of Afghanistan, Punjab and Kashmir that became in the early centuries of this millennium the foci of an immense religious awakening and the spearheads of a mighty proselytising drive across the caravan routes of Middle Asia.

Hiuen-Tsang in the seventh century (629-645) mentioned that Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva and Kumāralabdha (Kumāralāta) were contemporaries, calling them the four suns which illumined the world. It appears that all the four were living for some time together in North-West India in the 2nd century A.D. Kalhaṇa notes that Nāgārjuna was the only lord of the land in Kashmir at the time of the Kushān emperrors. The emergence of the Gothic Indo-Afghan sculpture in Gāndhāra in the third century A.D., of which the most notable examples have come from the Kabul valley, especially from Hadda near Jalalabad, also testifies to the spontaneity and intensity of the new religious upsurge, among the Bactrians, Kushāns and other converts of foreign origin. The third century witnessed also the composition of the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka and Āryasūra's Jātakamālā, two of the principal texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism and, perhaps, also of the Lalitavistāra and portions of the Divyāvadāna; while the kāvyas and plays of Aśvagoṣa, the ministrel of the Mahāyāna, migrated even to distant Turfan on the fringe of the Gobi desert. It also saw the greatest glory of the university of Taxila. Important since the Maurya times as the chief centre of medical studies, Taxila became the most important cosmopolitan centre of learning and the principal home of Mahāyāna philosophy under the Kushāns until its ruthless destruction by the White Huns in the fifth century, when the university of Nālandā came into prominence. At Taxila in the late 2nd century A.D. there flourished the celebrated Sautrāntika philosopher Kumāralāta, who was Aśvaghoṣa's junior contemporary. From Aśvaghoṣa, who was a peripatetic teacher, preacher, musician and play-wright during Kanishka's time, to the distinguished brothers Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, who developed about the beginning of the fifth century the Yogācāra or idealistic school in Puruṣapura, this ancient Buddhist capital of the Kushān Emperors radiated the intellectual and artistic influences associated with the development and spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

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The Teaching of Kumarajiva in China

Within a few centuries, the Mahāyāna spread far and wide. It went to China, to Central Asia, to Korea, Japan and Southern Asia. As early as 121 B.C., huge golden images, supposed to be Buddhist, were found in the desert of Turkestan as a general of the Chinese Emperor Wu pursued the Hsiung-nu tribesmen deep into the desert. These were carried to the Imperial capital and set up in the palace. In 2 B.C., a Yue-chi transmitted certain Buddhist scriptures to the Chinese. In A.D. 65, Emperor Ming sent a delegation to the "Western Regions" for bringing the teachings of the Buddha. Some Buddhist scriptures and a portrait of the Buddha were obtained; while two Indian monks, Kaśyapa Mātaṅga and Dharmaratna, also accompanied them and settled in the Imperial capital for translating the texts into Chinese. Mātaṅga's translation of the Forty Sayings of the Buddha is extant. The first Buddhist monastery called the "White Horse Monastery" was then established in China, the first of its kind in that country. An Indian monk came to the court of Emperor Fei (A.D. 240-253), with Chinese translations of Buddhist law. By imperial edict, the Chinese monks were now compelled to conform to it. A Chinese pupil of the Indian monk named Chu Shih-hing travelled to Chinese Turkestan, where Buddhism was already flourishing, and brought back many ancient editions of Buddhist texts.

Tradition attributes the introduction of Buddhism into China and the Indo-Scythian countries by Kaśyapa Mātaṅga and Dharmaratna, whom Chinese ambassadors found engaged in missionary enterprise in 68 A.D. In Central Asia, a Kharoshṭhī manuscript of the Prākṛta Dhammapada, written in the script of the 2nd century A.D. has been discovered, along with a manuscript of the dramas of Aśvaghoṣa written about that time. With the visit of Kumārajīva (344-413) to China in 401 A.D., followed by his great translation work in the capital, is usually dated the first systematic propagation of the Mahāyāna in China. This was almost contemporaneous with the visit to India of the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien who was a disciple of Kumārajīva. In 400 A.D. Fa-Hien saw in Kashgar "over one thousand priests, all belonging to the Hīnayāna", and in Khotan "several tens of thousands of Buddhists, most of them belonging to the Mahāyāna". Even in far-off Karashahr and in Lop-nor, "there were some four thousand and more priests, all

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belonging to the Hīnayāna". By 453 A.D. Buddhism was adopted as the state religion of northern China by the Wei Dynasty. The rapid spread of Buddhism in China was largely due to the teaching of Kumārajīva, who taught many disciples in Chao-nan (401-413). Among them were some very famous Chinese philosophers, such as Seng-chao (384-414) and Tao-Sheng (-434). Through both these influential thinkers the basic Mahāyāna conceptions of the universality and originality of the Buddha-nature, derived from the Parinirvāṇa-sūtra, and the relativity of truth, stressed by the Mādhyamika school, came to be an integral part of Chinese thinking. The Mahāyānist dictum of the identification of Saṁsāra and Nirvāṇa, of suffering and enlightenment was paraphrased by Tao-Sheng thus: "The Enlightenment of Mahāyāna Buddhism is not to be sought outside the Wheel of Birth and Death. Within it one is enlightened by the affairs of birth and death". Again he observes: "If one sees Buddha, one is not seeing Buddha. When one sees there is no Buddha, one is really seeing Buddha". Between 520-526 also came to China from India an almost mythical figure, Bodhidharma, who taught the system of Ch'an (Sanskrit dhyāna) to Hui-ko (486-593). In China, both the universal Buddha-nature or the Universal Mind school and the school of Void persisted, and each of them blended with Taoism and was absorbed into the development of the Chinese mind. Hiuen-Tsang, who introduced in China the school of Yogācāra or subjective idealism, did not have many followers in China although his junior contemporary I-tsing called him the "Tripiṭaka Teacher of China" and placed him on an equal footing with Paramārtha and Kumārajīva. The Yogācāra school was limited in its influence to small groups of the elite. It was actually from Kumārajīva and his many influential disciples that there stemmed the tradition of Chinese Buddhism which profoundly influenced the later refinements of Taoism and Neo-Confucianism. The modern Chinese philosopher Fung-Yu-lan observes: "The idea of the Universal Mind is a contribution of India to Chinese philosophy. Before the introduction of Buddhism, there was in Chinese philosophy only the mind, but not the Mind. The Tao of the Taoists is the "mystery of mysteries", as Lao Tzu put it, yet it is not Mind. After Kumārajīva, Seng-chao and Tao-Sheng there is in Chinese philosophy not only mind, but also Mind. The Buddhist monk Tao-Sheng taught for many years at Lushan in Kiangsi that became a principal centre of Buddhist learning. His

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eloquence was such that it was said that when he spoke even the stones nodded assent.

The Mahayana—a Far-reaching Humanistic Movement in Asia

The teaching of Kumārajīva and Bodhidharma in China was reinforced by the visit from India of a continuous, nay unending, chain of learned, indefatigable monk-pilgrims. A ceaseless, self-forgetful missionary zeal and activity, that braved the burning sun and the scorching heat of the Taklamakan desert, the banditry of the wilds and snow-covered mountain ranges of the Hindukush and the Pamirs or the risks of precarious voyages in unknown eastern seas were characteristic of the new leaven of the Mahāyāna which profoundly transformed the spirit of Buddhism by becoming in both principle and practice a universal religion. In the oasis cities of the northern and southern trade routes in Central Asia were built numerous Buddhist shrines with hundreds of images in clay or wood, and frescoes and banners bearing the impress of the motifs and techniques of Mathurā, Sārnāth and Ajantā. The artists were Central Asiatic, Iranian, Armenian, Syrian, Scythian, Turk and Chinese, but the mother schools for all were Sārnāth and Ajanta that defined the proportions of the ideal of manly beauty of the Compassionate One and His various incarnations. Soon China had numerous temples and images. The first emperor of the Sui dynasty (589-618) alone ordered the construction of 3,792 temples, and caused 106,580 new images to be made and 1,508,904 images to be repaired. Among the ancient and more celebrated Buddhist images the following may be mentioned: the colossal Buddha surrounded by thousands of smaller Buddhas at Yun-kang, Shansi (5th century A.D.), the Bodhisattva in the caves of Lung-men with emperors and empresses appearing as donors and bringing offerings (6th century A.D.); the bronze images of Amitābha Buddha and attendant Bodhisattvas in the Tuan-fang shrine (593 A.D.); the images of Kuan-shih-yin (which is Kumārajīva's translation of the term Avalokiteśvara from the Puṇḍarīka) that were worshipped in all Buddhist shrines in China by the 6th century A.D.; and, the vast numbers of images in the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas at Tun-huang (6th century A.D.) The march of Buddhism to China along the trade-routes and oasis cities of Central Asia was associated with an exuberant literary

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and artistic activity, promoted by the inward and outward journeys of traders, scholars, students and monks from the 4th to the 10th century. Many painters became monks and many monks painters in order to decorate Buddhist shrines and caves; while in the seats of learning and in households painting was taught as a fine art. Buddhism gradually assumed a Chinese pattern in the land of its adoption with a stress of the bliss of the Blessed Land or the Western Paradise, the compassion of Kuan-yin and the adoration of the spirits of the departed. India was the Pure Land of the West for the Chinese faithful, and the acceptance of India and her thought and culture as something transcending the world had a most salutary effect upon Chinese life and culture. From China Buddhism crossed into Korea in the 4th century. The missionary was a Buddhist monk Sundao. In the 6th century the ruler of the south-western state of Korea sent missionaries, images and sacred books to the Emperor of Japan. For a few decades there was opposition from the native religion of Shintoism. But when the Empress Suikao came to the throne in Japan in 588 A.D., her nephew Shotaku Taishi, who was regent, built the first Buddhist temple in the country and also erected hospitals, dispensaries and alms-houses. Gradually Buddhism spread among the common people and reached some of its finest phases in Japan.

The Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscriptions record that fraternities of monks converted Kashmir, Gāndhāra, China, Chilāta, Tośalī, Aparānta, Vaṅga, Vanavāsī, Yavana, Damila, Palura and the island of Ceylon. It was the new and higher religion of the Bodhisattva which went forth from the bosom of Indian culture in its evangelising mission across the highlands and deserts of Central Asia into China and across the Indian Ocean into the Island India of the East. Indian philosophy, religion and art, all now entered their golden age. Human history can hardly record a more fruitful and far-reaching humanistic movement. Not even the propagation of Christianity could show the peaceful, many-sided advance in civilization associated with the spread of the Mahāyāna.

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CHAPTER XV

THE GOLDEN AGE OF CULTURE: THE GUPTA RENAISSANCE AND AFTER

The Brahmanical Renaissance under the Imperial Guptas

The Imperial Guptas ushered in the Golden Age of India when her synthesizing genius gave birth to some of the world's best creations in art, literature, philosophy and religion, and a humane and catholic social scheme that established its replica in distant countries in South-east Asia. The golden epoch which dazzled the course of art, religion and culture of Asia from the 4th to the end of the 8th century witnessed the glory of the great Buddhist universities with their hundreds of students from the rest of Asia, the embassy of Yaśovarman to China, the missions of Padmasambhava, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalāsila to Tibet and the power and grandeur of the Buddhist Pāla empire with its artistic revival (from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries) and influence upon the art and religion of South-east Asia. Humanity lived five privileged centuries in India, under the Guptas and Harsha and their successors, comparable to the age of Pericles in Athens, of Augustus in Rome and of Elizabeth in England. It was the epoch of the development of the six Brahmanical philosophic systems, the poetry and drama of Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, Kumāradāsa, Daṇḍī and Viśākhadatta, the great redactions of the epics and the Pūraṇas, the metaphysics of Āsanga, Vasubandhu and Diṅnāga, the astronomy of Āryabhaṭa and Varāhamihira, and the plastic art of Mathurā, Vidisa, Sārnāth and Nālandā. It was the heydey of the universities of Kashmīr, Nālandā, Vikramasila and Valabhi, the Chinese pilgrimages to the holy land of the Ganges and the mountainous Gandhāra and Kashmīr and the Hinduization of South-east Asia. India's influence and status in Asia were in this period abundantly evident from the Ceylonese embassy to Samudragupta (about 360 A.D.), Harsha's embassy to China (641 A.D.), the four missions of Wang-Hieun-Tse (643-657 A.D.) to Kananj, Yaśovarman's embassy to China (731 A.D.), the mission of Śāntarakṣitā and Padmasambhava to Tibet, the Pallava cotribution to the colonial development and art of the

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East till the close of the 8th century, the construction of the monastery at Nālandā by Bālaputradeva, king of Suvarṇadvīpa and finally the rise of the Pāla Empire (725-1197) with its suzerainty extending from Gandhāra to Kalinga under Dharmapāla (770-810 A.D.) and its extensive missionary activities in Nepal, Tibet, Southern India, Ceylon and Java. For three centuries after the decline of the Gupta power and the Hun occupation of the Punjab and Malwa the lamp of culture and learning was shining throughout the land, as Hiuen-tsang found, from Kashmir to Kāñcī and from Valabhī to Tāmralipti. The emperors Harsha, Yaśovarman, Nāgabhaṭṭa II of the Pratihāra dynasty and Dharmapāla of Bengal kept alive the Gupta traditions by their successful resistance of the invasion of foreigners and noble patronage of culture and learning. In fact the great Imperial Gupta tradition constituted the classical framework of Indian culture through the ages, utilised rather than obliterated by the Moslem and the British.

The efflorescence of the Gupta age was the culmination of the Brāhaminical revival that began centuries ago with Pushyamitra and with the Sātavāhanas and that gave India the popular name "the country of the Brāhmaṇs" as mentioned by Hiuen-Tsang in the 7th century. After the fall of the Śuṅgas in the first century B.C., the republican Yaudheyas, who extended their sway from Rājpūtanā to the Punjab, the Bhāraśivas, who ruled over a large part of Northern India and performed ten Aśvamedha sacrifices, and the Vākāṭakas, who ruled Central India from their capital at Nandivardhan, maintained successfully the Brāhmanic national resistance against the attack of the Yavanas and the Kushāns. It is true that the Yavanas and the Kushānas carved out large portions of the North, but they were no foreigners. Bactrian potentates and Kushān monarchs were adherents of the new religions of India—Bhāgavatism and Buddhism. Kadphises II was a convert to Śaivism; and Kanishka, in spite of his Zoroastrian leanings, was a convert to Mahāyāna Buddhism. Thus the Scythian and Kushāna occupation of the North for about three centuries and a half shed to a large extent its foreign character and stamp. And for these three centuries and a half India was completely free from foreign inroads.

The National Resistance Against the Sakas and Huns

The founder of the Gupta house was Candragupta, who as a result largely of his marriage with a Licchavi princess, could rise

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into power and established himself as master of the Ganges valley as far as Prayāga. In A.D. 330, he was succeeded by young Samudragupta, who at once set forth on a digvijaya, similar to that idealised by Kālidāsa as the first duty of a Kshatriya ruler. His dominion extended to as far as Malabār and the Tanjore valley in the south to Mālwā in the west and to Kāmarūpa in the east. After conquering the whole of Āryāvarta, Samudragupta celebrated the horse-sacrifice and struck coins bearing the legend, Aśvamedha-parākramaḥ and depicting a horse standing before the sacrifical post. He was also a good musician and a poet. He obtained the title of the poet king (kavirāja), used to play on the lyre and interested himself in religious discussions. The famous Mahāyāna patriarch, Vasubandhu, was one of his counsellers. His son Candragupta II Vikramāditya succeeded to the throne in A.D. 380. He transferred his capital to Ayodhyā whence he set out for the conquent of Western Mālwā and Sourāshṭra, that were then under the rule of the Śakas. His victory against the Śaka king is suggested in Bāṇa's Harṣa-charita as well as in a few other works such as the Kāvya-mimāṁsā of Rājaśekhara and the Śṛṅgāra-prakāśa of Bhoja. He lived for sometime in Ujjain after his conquest of Western India, as a result of which the Gupta Empire obtained access to the important ports of Broach and Sopara on the Arabian Sea. Thus the wealth of the Egyptian and Roman trade began to flow into the cities of the Ganges valley. Candragupta II Vikramāditya's residence in Ujjain after the signal victory over the Śakas lent support to the legend of Vikramāditya Śakāri's court at Ujjain being adorned by the "nine gems" including Kālidāsa and Varāhamihira. Candragupta II Vikramāditya had one of his daughters, Prabhāvatī Guptā, married to Rudrasena II, the Vākāṭaka ruler of Central India and the Deccan. After the premature death of her husband, Queen Prabhāvatī Guptā became regent for two decades on behalf of her son and carried on the administration for a number of years under the supervision of her illustrious father. The little boy Pravarasena II later on composed a work entitled Setubandha which, according to its commentator, underwent revision at the hands of Kālidāsa at the instance of Vikramāditya. Candragupta II Vikramāditya was succeeded by Kumāragupta (415-455) and Skandagupta (455-480).

During this period India like Europe in the West was put to the most severe test. The Gupta Emperors had not the political

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sagacity of the Mauryas, who built a larger empire than theirs five centuries back, and retained an effective suzerainty over Gāndhāra and a strong garrison in the north-western mountain passes, through which foreign hordes usually found their entry into India. Before the rise of the Guptas, the north-west of India had been lost to the foreigners—the Sassanid kingdom extending from Central Asia, Afghanistan and North-western Frontier Province to Seistan and Sindh and the Śakas occupying the whole Indus valley up to Kāthiāwār. The decline of the Kushān power from the end of the reign of the last great Kushān king Vāsudeva I (152-176 A.D.) was followed by the conquest of the Sassanian king, Bahram II (276-293) of large parts of North-western and Western India from the Kushān and Śaka chiefs. The Śaka chiefs had been entrenched in Sindh and in parts of Western India for about two centuries but were now hard pressed by the republican tribes such as the Ābhīras and Mālavas in Rājpūtānā, Mālwā and parts of the Central provinces and by the Sassanians who from across the Indus conquered the whole of Śakasthāna (about 284 A. D.) and claimed overlordship, under Bahram II over the Śaka satraps of Sindh, Kāthiāwār, Gujarāt and Mālwā. According to Herzfeld these satraps are mentioned in the great Paikuli inscription as waiting on the Shāhānshāh Naresh upon his accession on the throne (293 A.D.) Jarl Charpentier considers that the Sassanians probably held sway over this Greater Śakasthāna until about (390-400 A.D.) when Kāthiāwār, Gujarat and Mālwā were reconquered by Candragupta II Vikramāditya. Soon the Imperial Guptas had to encounter a more formidable invader—the Hūṇs, who easily wiped out the petty Kidara Kushān rulers of the Punjab that was left undefended by both Candragupta II and Kumāragupta even though the former had carried his victorious arms to the banks of the Indus. For a time the Hūṇs were held in check by Skandagupta, who valiantly resisted the attack. Skandagupta's pillar of victory set up at Bhitari describes how he had to spend a night on the bare ground of the battlefield, and how after his signal victory he galloped into the courtyard of the Imperial palace at Pātalīputra to inform his mother (whose name was probably Devakī) about it "just as Kṛṣṇa having slain his enemies, betook himself to his weeping mother, Devakī." A great calamity for the country was averted, and Skandagupta's heroism was sung "by happy men even down to the children". India has gratefully cherished the

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memory of this mighty achievement in the legend of Vikramāditya narrated in Somadeva's Kathā-sarit-sāgara. This victory was indeed epoch-making, for the Hūṇs, then at the height of their power, after their rebuff in India, were deflected Westward and brought about the disintegration of the Roman Empire. Skandagupta assumed the title of Vikramāditya along with that of Kramāditya. After about a century, the Hūṇs did come back to India, but then their mighty sweep across vast continents had already lost its momentum. But for at least three centuries and a half, the Kushān and the Gupta Empires between them safeguarded the peace of the country.

Religious Liberalism of the Gupta Age

It is the long period of order and security which gave the opportunity for the fine efflorescence of Gupta culture, the distinctive character of which was, according to the spirit of the age, assimilation rather than rejection, integration rather than conflict. The Imperial Guptas, styling themselves Bhāgavatas or worshippers of Bhagavān Vāsudeva were leaders of the Brāhmaṇic revival but gave support also to Buddhist expansion. Like the Brāhmaṇic Vishṇu-sthānas, Deva-kulas and Deva-sabhās, the Buddhist and Jain vihāras were also objects of support and protection. The Buddhist monastery at Nālandā, according to Hiuen-Tsang, was built by the Gupta Emperor, Śakrāditya, that according to some historians is another name of Candragupta II (Devarāja); while the famous monastery of Dudda in Valabhī in the west was due to the benefactions of the Maitrakas, the worshippers of Śiva. There were 10,000 students accommodated in Nālandā, with its six-storeyed monasteries, the gift of six kings; the teachers numbered 1,510 who gave 100 different discourses every day. Such discourses covered the three Vedas, the Atharva-veda, Hetuvidyā (logic), Śabdavidyā (grammar and philology), Cikitsāvidyā (medicine), Sāṁkhya, Nyāya, Yoga-śāstra and other subjects like law, philosophy, philology, astronomy and the grammar of Pāṇini. Hiuen-Tsang studied at Nālandā all the collections of Buddhist books as well as the sacred books of the Brāhmaṇas. It was usual at this University to have different teachers giving expositions of different and contrary schools of thought raising doubts and challenging counter-arguments. Vainyagupta, one of the later Gupta kings, gave a donation to the Mahāyāna Buddhist vihāra, the Vaivartika Sangha. Later on Harsha in the distribution of royal charity at Prayāga gave

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preference to the Buddhists but did not disregard the Nirgranthas and the Brāhmaṇs, and the images of Āditya and Īśvara were installed along with the image of the Buddha in the great ceremony. The rich people of the land, while they granted lands and agrahāras to Brāhmaṇs to help them in their life of learning and performance of expensive Vedic rituals, such as the agni-hotra and pañca-mahāyajñas, did not disregard other religionists. A Jain nobleman takes credit to himself in his inscription for his attachment to the Brāhmaṇs, religious preceptors and ascetics (dvija-guru-yati). Just as the Jains and the Buddhists held in high esteem the Brāhmaṇs, the latter paid their due reverence to the Tīrthaṅkaras and the Bodhisattvas. Hiuen-Tsang mentions that while he was in the town of Śākala, where Menander ruled, he met an old Brāhmaṇ who was well-versed in the doctrine of the Mādhyamika school. He spent a month with him studying the masters of this school, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva. All this shows the liberal critical spirit of the Gupta age.

In philosophy, literature, art and the positive sciences, there was a free borrowing from different schools and also from the Yavanas and other foreigners; in literary patronage and administration, there was no distinction between Brāhmaṇs, Buddhists, Nirgranthas, Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas, pure and mixed castes, and even Indians and foreigners. In the sphere of Brāhmanical religion proper, though Bhāgavatism became the religion of the Gupta Empire, and most of the Gupta Emperors and following them the local kings of the age called themselves Parama-Bhāgavatas (worshippers of Bhagavān or Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva), yet they worshipped Śakti or Durgā, invoked her in their strenuous campaigns of conquest and defence against the invading Hūṇs, and depicted her in their coins. Siṁha-vāhanā and Lakshmī appropriately figured on many Gupta coins. The worship of Śiva, Sūrya and Kārtikeya, the god of war, was also popular in the Gupta age. Hindu religious belief in the Gupta epoch is indicated by the names of various other divinities mentioned in the inscriptions: Kubera, Varuṇa, Indra, Yama, Kāmadeva, Lokapāla, and Bṛhaspati. Other objects of devotion included Nara, Kinnara, Vidyādhara and Gandharva. The Hindu sects that were important were the Bhāgavatas, Pāśupatas, Māheśvaras, Souras and perhaps also Śāktas or Kāpālikas, as these were called by Hiuen-Tsang. Vedic rituals were revived by the Gupta Emperors, especially the Imperial house sacrifices associated with

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conquest. Many other Vedic sacrifices, performed by some Vākāṭaka kings, find mention in the inscriptions: Agniṣṭoma, Aptoryāma, Ukthya, Ṣodaśin, Atirātra, Vājapeya, and Sadyaskara. The Brāhmaṇs observed the Pañcamahāyajña and Agnihotra rituals, and villages were granted to them for the performance of these sacrificial observances. Brahmanical religion, revived by the Imperial Guptas, mentioned (in the case of Samudragupta) as "the refuge of religion" and "the follower of the path of the sacred hymns" and of "the dictates of the Śāstras", assumed a synthetic phase, embracing the worship of a wide variety of gods and godesses of the Hindu pantheon and the restoration of Vedic ceremonies, and at the same time tolerant towards Asceticism, Jainism and Buddhism. No doubt such eclecticism contributed towards the spread of Indian Brahmanical culture to foreign countries. The Gupta tradition of religious tolerance and patronage of all faiths, schools and sects was maintained in the time of Harsha as shown by this Emperor's five yearly convention of the Assembly of Mokṣa, in which he used to offer gifts to selected Buddhists, Brāhmaṇs and Heretics and worship the Buddha, Sūrya and Śiva in succession.

Racial Admixture and Rise of New Castes

Religious eclecticism in the Gupta age was stimulated by the large influx of foreigners, many of whom obtained entry into the framework of the caste system. There was also a good deal of admixture of castes, while many pursued improper and abnormal occupations and callings outside the well-recognised boundaries of their specific castes. That the classical theory of the four varṇas had already broken down in the Gupta age is clearly indicated by the Mahābhārata declaring that a Brāhmaṇ by birth only, who had no Brahmanical learning nor discipline, was no Brāhmaṇ at all. Where the actual occupations followed by the population had no reference to birth and there was a good deal of intermixture of castes, the Epic definitely laid down that "all the varṇas bear towards one another the relation of consanguinity through the intermediate classes" and also developed the theories of Varṇasaṅkara, Āpad-dharma, and Kaliyuga. It is a paradox that the crystallisation of jātis or castes based on occupation and heredity and of the doctrine of Jāti-dharma in the Gupta age, as stressed in Manu, Yājñavalkya and Nārada Smṛti, was associated with the

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liberal trend of Brahmanical society to facilitate entry of the Mlecchas, Ājīvas or Avaras. According to the Vishṇupurāṇa, the Yavanas, Śakas and Pāradas became Mlecchas since they gave up their original dharma and were forsaken by the Brāhmaṇs. Manu also mentions that both the Yavanas and Śakas, who were originally Kshatriyas sank into the lowest Śūdrahood due to lapse of saṁskāras and loss of contact with Brāhmaṇs. Various myths were expounded in the contemporary Smṛtis and Purāṇas to effect a compromise between devotion to the ancient metaphysical varṇāśrama ideal and the reality of racial admixture and occupational inter-change and mobility. The myths of Varṇa-saṅkara or inter-breeding, Kaliyuga, Āpad-dharma and promise of future birth in the next higher caste on the observance of svadharma were all calculated to encourage social assimilation of exotic elements and at the same time safeguard the proper and righteous conduct of the dvijas in the Brahmanic society of the Vedic pattern. Kālidāsa mentions that the protection of varṇāśrama was one of the major duties of the king, who is a charioteer driving the car of righteousness to which are yoked his people, so directed that they do not deviate from the righteous path enjoined by Manu, even to the extent of a line (Raghuvaṁśa, I, 17). The Bhagavad-gītā also warns: "When lawlessness prevails, the women of the family become corrupt and Varṇa-saṅkara arises. By the misdeeds of those who destroy a family and create varṇa-saṅkara the immemorial laws of the caste and the family are destroyed" (I, 41-43). The established social order no doubt considerably lost its unity and cohesiveness but the new theistic cult of Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism, with its prophecy of the restoration of the righteous order, now protected the society against disintegration and exotic influences. The infringement of caste callings became widespread. We come across a Brāhmaṇ king, Viprarṣi Mātṛ-Vishṇu and also Brāhmaṇ ministers, such as Mayūra-rakṣaka and Śikharasvāmī. Similarly, the Kshatriyas are mentioned as traders. There was intermarriage between the Brāhmaṇs and the Kshatriyas. The shining instance is the marriage of Prabhāvatī Guptā with Rudrasena of the Brāhmaṇa Vākāṭaka family. The daughters of the Kadamba rulers, who where Brāhmaṇs, were also married in the Imperial Gupta family. A Brāhmaṇa Ravikīrti was married to a Kshatriya named Bhānuguptā. Harshavardhana's chronicler, Bāṇa, had a half-brother Chandrasena by a Śūdra mother who lived with him under the same roof. Hiuen-Tsang makes a significant

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observation about caste admixture, "There are also mixed castes; numerous clans formed by groups of people according to their kinds, and these cannot be described". It is true that under Gupta imperialism it was considered the duty of the sovereign to uphold the Varṇāśrama-dharma and to prevent the confusion and mixture of castes or infringement of caste duties. Harṣavardhana's father is credited with "the regulation of all the castes and stages of religious life". Kharagraha II, it is mentioned in another inscription, "properly regulated the practices of the different castes and stages of life". Mahārāja Harivarman is described as "employing his sovereignty for regulating the different castes and stages of religious life.' Abhayadatta, Governor of a province, is described as "the protector of castes", and his successor Dharmadosha as preventing the mixture of castes (Varṇa-saṅkara). The poet Kālidāsa, who gave the finest presentation of the social values and ideals of the Gupta age, no doubt stressed in many places in the Raghuvaṁśa that it was the duty of the king to protect the varṇāśramadharma, so that there may not be the least deviation from the righteous path as enjoined by Manu. The infringement of varṇāśrama-dharma, considered as an apācāra, was to be severely punished by the king for the maintenance of the righteous social order and the purity of the twice-born castes. All this, however, was an idealistic approach to the social situation. The social reality was far different, — composite and fast-changing. Vast numbers of foreign immigrants had to be given recognition as degraded Kshatriyas in the Hindu Smṛtis that indeed mentioned a number of mixed castes such as the Mūrdhāvasikta, Ambashṭha, Pāraśava, Ugra, Sūta, Karaṇa, Kshattā, Māgadha and Āyogava. Kāyasthas were also mentioned in the Gupta inscriptions as professional writers and not as a separate caste.

This process of social assimilation was, of couse, much accelerated after the fall of the early Gupta Empire, when the Pratihāras belonging to the race of the Gurjaras and the Hūṇas were Hinduized and stylized themselves as Rājpūts, tracing descent from the ancient Kshatriya clans. The system of Manu's classification, though intended to discourage caste-admixture, was itself an admission of the impurity of castes. Many foreigners, such as the Yavanas, Śakas, Pāradas and Pahlavas, were included by him among the Kshatriya groups. The ancient social gradation of the Brāhmaṇs, Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras was breaking to pieces in the

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Gupta period due to intercaste and inter-racial marriages and the Smṛtis did not as yet condemn admixture. The elaborate nomenclature and definition of the mixed (saṅkara) castes came later. Like the Sātavāhanas of the previous period, Ikṣava kings, who were Brāhmaṇs, had no scruples to bring brides from the Śaka rulers of Ujjain. Some Brāhmaṇs and Kshatriyas could easily take their places in Brāhmaṇ and Kshatriya kulas.

Improvement of the Status of the Sudras

The Śūdras also rose into importance in this period as traders and artisans, and some became captains and generals in the army. Yājñavalkya even laid down that the son of a Śūdra woman could inherit the property of a Brāhmaṇ. The Parāśara Smṛti written between the 1st and 5th century A.D., definitely mentions that a Vaiśya or a Śūdra should always live by trade, agriculture or handicraft. The Atri Smṛti also written in this age mentions that the Vaiśya follows agriculture, tends cattle and drives a trade, while the Śūdra sells shellac, salt, saffron, milk, clarified butter, honey or meat. Hiuen-Tsang actually finds the Śūdras as agriculturists who are industrious at sowing and reaping. It is clear that in the Gupta age while some of the Smṛtis contain statements, injunctions and prohibitions indicating Brahmanical class ascendency and differential treatment in favour of the Brāhmaṇas, the Śūdras are at the same time safeguarded a minimum of subsistence based on agriculture, small trade and handicraft. The attitude is definitely more liberal than that of Manu and Vasishṭha, who belong to somewhat earlier times and enjoined that service was the occupation of the Śūdras. The Gupta age does not go back to the Mauryan social equality and rights of Ārya citizenship for all, but at least corrects the glaring injustices of Brāhmaṇical class egotism that is prominent in the Mānava-dharma code of Manu.

Only the Candālas lived in utter social contumely and degradation. We came across the despised status of the Candālas in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad where they are mentioned with dogs and boars, given the leavings of food. Manu and Parāśara put the Candāla, Śvapacha and Domba (Doma) on the same stratum. From the different Smṛtis we learn that they used to live outside the habitation and were forbidden to enter towns and cities even at night. Their wealth, according to Manu, consisted of dogs and asses and their clothes those on corpses. Their main occupation

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was scavenging, while they sometimes acted as hangmen. According to Fa-Hien they were fishermen and hunters and sold meat and lived apart from others. "When they enter the gates of a city or a market place, they strike a piece of wood to make themselves known, so that men know and avoid them and do not come into contact with them". Hiuen-Tsang also records that butchers, fishermen, dancers, executioners, scavengers and their like have their habitations marked by a distinguishing sign and dwell outside the city. "Coming and going they sneak along the left side of the road". Uśanas in his Smṛtī mentions that the Cāndālas wear a leather-thong round their necks or a cymbal under their armpits, apparently to inform other people of their presence. Bāṇa in the Harshacaritaṃ graphically corroborates the segregation of the Caṇḍālas living hellish lives in the outskirts of habitations, hidden by thick bamboo forests. "The life there consisted of hunting, the food of flesh, the ointment of fat; the garments of coarse silk; the couches of dried skins; the house-hold attendants of dogs; wine and women; the oblation to the gods of blood; the sacrifice of cattle. The place was the image of all hells".

The Re-affirmation of Brahmanical culture against Foreign and Buddhist Ideals

The rapid change in the social composition of the Indian population within a compass of about three centuries bred a liberal, catholic mind and a spirit of intense devotion or bhakti to the personal god and of compassion to fellow-creatures as the social expression of worship. An undaunted flight of the intellect in metaphysics and logic was associated with an amazing proliferation of sects and philosophical systems. Hindu, Jain and Buddhistic Brahmanic orthodoxy reacted to the fluent social and intellectual situation in several distinct ways. First, the codification in the Smṛtis and enunciation of Brāhmanic social and ethical ideals in the redactions of the Mahābhārata and the major Purāṇas served the most important purpose of reaffirming Hindu law, custom and culture against the incursion of exotic and barbarian ideals that the Yavanas and other Mlecchas were persistently introducing into Indian life. Whole kingdoms had been carved out in Gujarāt, Kāthiāwār, Mālwā, Mahārāshtra and the Punjab in the Pre-Gupta period by such foreigners and "Mlecchas" such as the Ābhīras, Gardabhilas, Śakas, Yavanas, Bāhlikas and Hūṇs. In their

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territories the Hindu social order and ācāra languished. Thus the Vishṇu Purāṇa laments: "These will all be contemporary monarchs reigning over the earth; kings of churlish spirit, violent temper and ever addicted to falsehood and unrighteousness. The people of various countries will intermingle with them and follow their example; and the barbarians, being powerful under the patronage of princes, and the purer tribes acting in a contrary manner will destroy the people" (IV, 24, 18-21). The Mandasor stone pillar inscription of Yaśodharman (middle of the 6th century) repeats the story of social downfall in almost similar terms: "The earth is afflicted by contemporary kings who manifest pride; who are cruel through want of proper training; who from delusion transgress the ways of righteousness and are destitute of virtuous delights". North-west India and Mālwā continued to be held by petty Hūṇ chiefs even after the decisive victory of Yaśodharman. Thus the Hindu scheme of life and culture were hardly safe against the onslaughts of the Mlecchas in large parts of India both in the first two centuries of the Christian era and again towards the close of the fifth and early in the 6th century A.D. The early Dharma Sūtras developed the theory of the Āpad-dharma and the Kali-yuga or the age of social downfall according to which the violation of duties even by the highest caste-men was tolerated and even accepted due to the exigency of social circumstances. The Mahābhārata refers to this, while the Bhagavad-gītā and the Purāṇas inculcate also the Messianic hope of incarnation of the future Saviour of Mankind, Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, who will be reborn as many times as there is decay of righteousness and upsurge of unrighteousness. The Divine prophecy of the restoration of the righteous order of society served to strengthen the Indian in his faith in his ancient values and institutions and protect him against new foreign influences and ideals. Positively, the epics, the Purāṇas and the Dharma-śāstras elucidated and clarified the fundamental common principles and values acceptable to all sects and philosophical schools in Brāhmanical culture. The entire social and metaphysical background of the Indian man and his scheme of life found, as never before, rich and vigorous literary expression in the voluminous epic and Puraṇic literature. In the Gupta age, Sanskrit replaced Prākṛt as the language of the people. As the great editors and scholars of the Gupta age expurgated, added and elaborated materials from the Mahābhārata and such Purāṇas as the Bhāgavata, Skanda, Śiva,

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Matsya and Vāyu, they not only rescued these from neglect or even oblivion but took the indispensable first step to defend the essentials of Brāhmaṇical dharma against Buddhism. Not merely the epics but also the major Purāṇas were brought alongside to the same level with the special objective of general education of the Śūdras and the women-folk of India.

The Rise of the Sudras

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa observes that for the Śūdras, women and fallen Brāhmaṇs, the Vedas are inaccessible; but the Mahābhārata is provided for them by the sage Vyāsa in compassion. The Mahābhārata explicitly mentions that all the four varṇas should hear the epic through a Brāhmaṇa as the reader. The Kalpataru permitted the Śūdras to read and repeat Purāṇa mantras, but other Smṛti digests observe that the Śūdras are Vājasaneyins. According to P. V. Kane this means that the Brāhmaṇs, as prescribed in the Gṛhyasūtra of the Vājasaneya śākhā, repeat the mantras for them. The Harivaṁśa declares: "All will expound Brāhmaṇ; all will be Vājasaneyins; when the yuga comes to a close the Śūdras will make use of the word 'bhoḥ' in address" (sarve brahmā vadishyanti sarve Vājasaneyinaḥ). In respect of religious rituals Manu observes that all religious acts, which the dvijas perform, can be undertaken by them provided they do not use the Vedic mantras. Certain passages of the Varāha, Vāmana and Bhaviṣya Purāṇas indicate that the Śūdras are entitled to learn and repeat mantras of Vishṇu from the Pancarātra texts and of Śiva, Āditya, Śakti and Vināyaka. Some of the sectarian Purāṇas, Tantras and Āgamas give detailed descriptions, of the initiation (dīkshā) of the Śūdras as the Bhāgavatas, Pāśupatas, Śaivas, Śāktas, Gāṇapatyas and other devotees, who could now worship the deity themselves. Bhāgavatism and the multiplication of various new religious sects indeed materially contributed towards the assertion of the rights of the Śūdras to the supreme wisdom and salvation without the specific Vedic homa and japa, and the intervention of the Brāhmaṇ priesthood. The round of ten domestic ceremonies or Saṁskāras, which the Śūdras could perform, though without Vedic mantras, along with vratas, fasts, dānas and the five daily sacrifices (panca mahāyajñas) had also a salutary, educative effect. Besides, for the Śūdras, the stress of the performance of pūrtadharma, i.e., the construction of wells, tanks and temples and distribution of food as works of

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charity, was contributory towards the welfare of the common people. That liberation was proceeding apace is evident from the Varāha-purāṇa which declared: "Being remembered or talked of, seen or touched, a devotee of the Bhagavat, even if he be a Caṇḍāla, purifies (the people) easily" (211, 88). Similarly the Gautamīya Tantra observes: "People of all castes and whether men or women, may receive its mantras. In the cakra there is no caste at all, even the lowest Caṇḍāla being deemed whilst therein higher than the Brāhmaṇs". The rigours of the Varṇāśramadharma were not only mitigated in this manner but also by great numbers of the Śūdras accepting sannyāsa, yoga and the life of the yati and parivrājaka as Pancarātras, Śaivas, Bhairavas, Kapālas and Yamalas.

The Rejoinders to Buddhism

The entire religious movement took both an educational and a patriotic turn. Apart from the egalitarian trends of early Pañcarātra Vaishṇavism, Śāivism, Śāktism and other heresies the orthodox Brāhmaṇ teachers and preachers as they went round among the common people calling upon the Kshatriyas to fulfil their true social role by war-like duties rather than by seclusion in the monastery or cloister, and also upon the Vaiśyas and Śūdras to conform to the Dharma of their vocations were rescuing the country from a false pietism and other-worldliness that were emasculating the manhood of the race. Such preaching went home to the people stirred by the glorious traditions of military valour of the legendary Kshatriya houses and repelled by the immorality that was then gradually creeping into the Buddhist Sangharāmas, many of which were rolling in wealth and luxury. This probably led to the exclusion of nuns from the Sangha, as Buddhaghoṣa mentions about 500 A.D. Soon the epics, the Purāṇas, the Hitopadeśa and the Pancatantra were to take the place of the Buddhist Jātakas, although the former were written in Sanskrit that indeed became the *lingua franca* of the Gupta age. Two centuries and a half later, Hiuen-Tsang refers to Sanskrit as the language of the cultured classes including the Buddhists; the best Sanskrit, both spoken and written, being that of Middle India. But there were the noted variations from the original source and standard, which by use became the norm, and gave rise to vulgar dialects removed from the pure style. As a matter of fact, even the Buddhist and Jain

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philosophers and literary men began now to write in Sanskrit that replaced Pāli and the Prākṛts as the language of the common people, understood from one end of the continent to the other, and even beyond in South-east Asia. This was all the more necessary as over and above the popular vogue of the Buddhist Jātaka stories, important Buddhist Kāvyas like the Buddha-carita and Soundarānanda were written in Sanskrit and appealed to the Hindu elite. Kālidāsa's Raghuvaṁśa and Kumārasaṁbhava served as rejoinders to these on behalf of Brāhmanism and the Brāhmanic social order.

Mutual Borrowing of Buddhist and Brahmanical Doctrines

Second, another way in which Brāhmanic culture met the challenge of Buddhism was by taking the wind out of its sails through the acceptance of the Buddha as one of the ten incarnations of Vishṇu. Thus the Hindu mass was induced to accept Buddhism as one of the various complex intellectual dogmas within the field of Brāhmanism. While on the social side, there were inter-marriages between the royal families in India irrespective of their being Buddhist, Śaivas or Vaishṇavas, on the doctrinal side there were mutual assimilation and integration of dogmas and beliefs. Vishṇu, the serene Vedic god, resting in the waters of eternity before the creation of the cosmos, became in the Gupta age, through the doctrine of incarnation, a dynamic saviour of mankind with his Messianic promise and redeeming love for mankind like those of the compassionate Bodhisattva of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The dynamism of the deity in both Mahāyāna Buddhism and reformed Hinduism brought religion closer to the heart of the masses, and was eminently suitable for a cosmopolitan epoch in which worship and work had to be reconciled and the cult of self-sacrifice, service and compassion for all creatures definitely stood out as the universal feature of all faiths of the time. On the other hand, the emphatic demand of early Buddhism for a complete break with saṁsāra and the adoption of monachism for all was rejected by the new Mahāyāna interpretation that reconciled worldly with religious life through the identification of Bodhisattva's peace and activity with the life of the world, Nirvāṇa itself now meaning not the flight of the Alone to the Alone but a dynamic, eternal and infinite outpouring of the One-in-the All. Further, early Buddhism completely repudiated Brāhmanic social gradation and classification of duties according to varṇa and stage or order

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of life. The social change of the Gupta age characterised by the inter-mixture of castes and caste functions, left little difference between orthodoxy and heresy in this regard.

Thirdly, Buddhism that appealed to the aristocracy of intellect and remained the religion of a very small minority of the Indian people developed exceedingly subtle, complex and elaborate metaphysical doctrines that were crystallized into as many as eighteen sects, mentioned by Hiuen-Tsang, of which the most important were the Mādhyamikas and the Yogācāras developed by Nāgārjuna, Āsaṅga, Vasubandhu and other great patriarchs in the Gupta period. The teachings of the two fifth century philosopher brothers, Āsaṅga and Vasubandhu, who were the founders of the Idealistic School, and hailed from Ayodhyā but taught in Purushapura, established high standards of metaphysical speculation throughout Central Asia, China, Nepal and Tibet and profoundly influenced the development of the Mahāyāna in these countries. Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakosha presents a highly original psychological theory of sensation and understanding as the basis of metaphysics in which he also anticipates the modern concept of the subconscious. Vasubandhu's direct disciple was the celebrated logician, Diṅnāga. Diṅnāga and Dharmakīrti developed in the 6th and 7th centuries an extraordinarily subtle theory of syllogism, inference and judgment that has attracted attention of modern logicians in the West. After a long sojourn and study at Nalanda, Hiuen-Tsang (630-643) compiled the classic anthology of text and comment of the Yogācāra school, called the Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi. The Mahāyāna metaphysical speculations, some of which represent the highest flights ever achieved by the human intellect, provoked energetic reactions, rejoinders and rapprochements in orthodoxy, of which the most significant is the system of the Vedānta. Literary historians are of opinion that the particular Upaniṣads, that are exclusively Vedāntic, belong to several centuries after the beginning of the Christian era. Such is the Māndūkya with its commentary, the Gauḍapādīya Kārikā, probably of the seventh century. Between the first and fifth centuries, the philosophical systems of Brāhmanism were evolved and formulated; all of them rest on the notion of the Ātman, Brahmaṇ or the Universal self, eternal, omnipresent and identical with th Absolute. In the Vedānta system's thoroughgoing rejection of dualism and stress of the doctrine that the phenomena of the world, that are discrete and manifold, are real in so far

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as they are grounded in the Absolute, Ātman-Brahman, and its corollary that man's bondage exist only by illusion or Māyā; and as the veil of illusion is done away with, his bondage and salvation, transmigration and mukti, existence and non-existence become identical, we reach not the borderlands but the very heart of the Buddhist principles of Suchness and cosmic vacuity or silence. The Mahāyāna text, Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, actually compares the unreality of the phenomenal world to the horns of the hare, the son of a barren woman and the circle of fire produced when a burning stick (alāta) is turned round. Such a notion along with the positive conception of Tathāgata-garbha (the womb of all that merges in Suchness), which is veiled by the phenomenal appearances of sense operation, formed an integral part of the development of Vedāntic non-duality that ran in almost parallel lines with the uncompromising idealism of Āsaṅga, Vasubaṅdhu and Hiuen-Tsang, so often referred to by Kumārila and Śaṅkara. The similarity with the doctrine of Ātman as eternal agent and qualified is rocognised in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra which states, however, that "this explanation of Tathāgata-garbha as the ultimate truth and reality is given in order to attract to our creed those heretics who are superstitiously inclined to believe in the Ātman doctrine", and that the instruction of a philosophy that admits of no soul or substance in anything (nairātmya) would frighten the disciples. On the other hand, Gauḍapāda, one of the precursors of the Vedānta system and perhaps himself a Buddhist, fully assimilated the doctrines of cosmic emptiness and suchness of both the Buddhist schools of Mādhyamika and Yogācāra, and reached the conclusion that the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the unconditioned, eternal, universal, silent Ātman is the same as the Buddhist ultimate reality of non-dual, eternal, undefinable silent Vijñāna or vacuity "from which there is no coming into Being in any manner, as the Buddhas have shown". Thus Gauḍapāda's interpretation led the way to the reinterpretation of the Upaniṣads on Buddhist lines that crystallized into the philosophy of the Vedānta in the hands of his great disciple, Śaṅkara, who could not but have been influenced by the doctrines of Buddhism and Jainism, perhaps still living in his homeland. At the time of Hiuen-Tsang's visit in the 7th century Mahā-Kośala, Mahārāshṭra and the Koṅkan, all maintained Saṅghārāmas with Buddhist monks, partly Mahāyānists and partly Hīnayānists. Amarāvatī was an ancient seat of Buddhism. While the name of the famous

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Mahāyānist scholar Nāgārjuna is also associated with the ancient site of the Nāgārjunīkonḍa stūpa, Diṅnāga, the famous Buddhist logician, came from the Andhra country. Presumably, therefore, Śaṅkara must have been familiar with Buddhist ideas. In one of his commentaries he observes: "The doctrine of the reality of the external world was indeed propounded by the Buddha conforming himself to the mental state of some of his disciples, whom he perceived to be attached to external things; but it does not represent his own view, according to which cognitions alone are real." Scholars have also noted the striking analogy between the Mahāyāna position, fully expounded in the Lotus-sūtra, and Śaṅkara's own critical procedure, distinguishing the parā and aparā vidyā, and between the corresponding texts. Thus does orthodoxy take over an integral part of the principles of Buddhism. The rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism represents the conquest of the simple creed of Gautama by Hinduism. The rise of the Vedānta, the most famous of Indian philosophical systems, that still commands the allegiance of the elite in India, marks the triumph of Buddhism over its conqueror. No wonder that the interpretation of Śaṅkara was condemned by orthodoxy as "disguised Buddhism".

Neo-Hinduism Borrowing Buddhist Ceremony, Fast and Holiday

Fourthly, the reformed Hinduism was not slow to adopt some of the spectacular rituals and ceremonies of Buddhism such as the car procession of the idols and elaborate gorgeous ritual in the temples that had their powerful appeal to the masses. In Khotan, and Pāṭaliputra, Fa-Hien came across processions of the Buddha images. In Pāṭaliputra there were about twenty decorated cars taken out with figures of the Buddha in sitting postures and Bodhisattvas in attendance. An inscription of Kumāragupta mentions a similar procession of Śiva image, the term for such processions being Devadroṇi. Corresponding to the holy days of both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism, Brāhmaṇism adopted holidays for fasts, and religious gifts such as those associated with the awakening (utthāna) and sleep (śayana) of Vishṇu, as mentioned in an inscription of the fifth century. The piety and beneficence of kings, nobles and the common people were also abundantly forthcoming, in the period of Brāhmaṇic revival, for gifts of villages (agrahāras), consecrated to the use of Brāhmaṇ teachers (bhaṭṭas) and of

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students and for temples, devakulas and devasabhās, just as Buddhism elicited gifts to saṅghas and Vihāras. The numerous Agrahāra villages along with the tīrthas became in fact the foci of the Brāhmanic revival.

The Common Doctrine of Sakti

Finally, all the religions, Vaishṇavism, Śaivism and Buddhism, found their common ground or background in the doctrine of the Female Principle, Śakti, which Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavadgītā mentions as 'My Prakṛti'. The evolution of Tāntrikism dates from the Gupta period when certain rites designated as the Left-hand path (Vāma-mārga) came to be widely practised. As early as about first century B. C. Guṇāḍhya refers to Tāntrika worship and specifically to the Left-hand path. Hiuen-Tsang himself, while proceeding from Ayodhyā down the Ganges, had a narrow escape from robber-votaries of the goddess Durgā, to whose altar he was to be taken for ritual sacrifice, but a typhoon arose miraculously and frightened the robbers away. He mentions, among the Hindu ascetic sects, the Kāpālikas wearing necklace of skulls and worshippers of Durgā. In the famous temple of Mahākāli at Ujjain, so often mentioned by Kālidāsa, who in his benedictory verse in the Raghuvaṁśa, refers to the Tāntrika doctrine of the One-in-two (Śiva-śakti), Tāntrika rituals and ceremonies were performed before Śiva and his consort. We read in one of the Gupta inscriptions (No. 17) that a minister of a local king constructed a temple for the worship of the seven Divine Mothers, "a very terrible abode, full of Ḍākinis or spirits who utter loud and tremendous shouts in joy and stir up the very oceans with the mighty winds rising from the performance of Tāntrika rites". Temples or images of Māhiṣamardinī have been found at Udayagiri and Bhumra in Central India; and a Durgā temple at Aihole. Among the names of Mother Goddess (Śakti) that find mention in the Gupta inscriptions are: Devī, Bhagavatī, Bhadrāryā, Pārvatī, Bhavānī, Gourī, Kātyāyanī. Other female divinities include Lakshmī, Sarasvatī, Śachī, Vaishṇavī, Devakī, Jāhnavī, Jāmbavatī and Paulomī. With the development of Tāntrikism in the later Gupta period and the creation of innumerable images of Śaktīs of the various Mahāyāna Buddhist divinities such as Mañjuśrī, Tārā and Marīci (the two latter being accepted as Hindu goddesses), the distinction between certain forms of Śaivism, Śāktism and Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism faded

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away. The final exit of Buddhism from India is fundamentally the consequence of both Buddhism and orthodoxy freely borrowing metaphysical principles and forms of worship from each other until in the popular mind the distinction between the religions became largely one of mere ritual. This was aided by the decline of important ancient Buddhist centres such as Vaiśālī, Srāvastī, Rāmagrāma and Kapilavastu (that Fa-Hien early in the fifth century found overgrown with jungle) due probably to the meandering of the rivers and malaria, and the destruction of the great Buddhist monasteries by the Hūṇs in Gāndhāra, Kashmir and the Punjab, whence originated most of the Mahāyāna dogmas. Like the Vedantin's Māyā or the Buddhist Śramaṇa's Avidyā on the world-stage, Buddhism withdrew from India as soon as its real role was appreciated.

The development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in its early phase in Gāndhāra under the Kushān Emperors bore the indelible stamp of foreign influences that we have already examined. It was also in Gāndhāra, a region most subjected to Hellenistic, Iranian and Central Asian influences, where also emerged the Buddhist Yogācāra doctrine of Āsaṅga, very contrary in spirit and grasp to Brāhmaṇical speculation. But Mahāyāna Buddhism was gradually Indianized and the absolute idealism of Āsaṅga, Vasubandhu, Diṅnāga, Śīlabhadra and Hiuen-Tsang,—all of North India, ran in parallel lines with the contemporary Brāhmanic philosophical systems of the Vaiśeṣika and the Vedānta. Not merely the flight of metaphysics, but also the appreciation of beauty in form and rhythm in art shed their foreign elements in the broad plains of the Ganges. Gāndhāran art that bore in its bosom Hellenistic and Iranian influences and that spread to various parts of India was soon to be replaced by a national style in the various centres of the Ganges Valley.

The Expression of the National Genius in Literature

It was the peace and tranquility of the land that proved most favourable to the full expression of the national genius reacting against all what was exotic and foreign in the fields of religion, philosophy, literature, science and art. The genius of the people expressed itself in the Gupta age, the ground being long prepared by contact with the Hellenic, Iranian and Chinese worlds, in the development of kāvya, drama, lyric and romance of adventure that

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all blossomed forth in this spacious age with enough leisure for the refined nobility. Love and adventure naturally occupied the leading places in literature. In the poetry of India there is neither squeamishness about sex nor brutish sensuality. The joys of a couple are often described according to the principles of Kāma-śāstra (the science of erotics), yet there is no exaggeration nor exuberance of the sexual sentiments. In the great poems of Kālidāsa, who, many scholars think, lived about 400 A.D., we find the gentle and smooth course of love in the family in a most exquisite, idealised setting. Love is a discipline and transmutation of desire, and its bliss can only be tasted by a couple long accustomed to the discipline of Kāma (passion). Yet we find in Kālidāsa the poignant grief of Rati for Kāmadeva burnt into ashes by the ascetic Śiva before the divine nuptials can be celebrated, and the deep longing of Yakṣa for his beloved that spills into the whole universe in the drip, drip, drip of the rainy season. Indian literature developed to the extent that we have a drama like Viśākhadatta's Mudrārākṣasa in which love plays no part and politics is the one dominant passion —loyalty to King Candragupta. Kālidāsa in his drama, Mālavikā and Agnimitra, refers to such previous celebrated authors as Bhāsa, Saumilla and Kaviputra. One of Bhāsa's best-known plays is Chārudatta, the theme of which is borrowed in the celebrated play called the Mṛcchakaṭika produced before the time of Kālidāsa. The characters of the play include villains, thieves and courtesans, and yet we find confident goodness and humanity in the midst of sordidness, and beauty, love and fidelity in the midst of the storms and passions of life. Only a civilization that reaches maturity and security can produce such a moving realistic drama like King Śūdraka's Mṛcchakaṭika—a genuine instance of "art for art's sake", yet suffused with the profound wisdom and serenity of India. Very different in spirit and temper is of course Kālidāsa's Śakuntalā that because of its deep humanism, its profound love of nature, its poignant situations and its æsthetic harmony is recognised as one of the world's greatest plays. Then there are the narrative tales of Guṇādhya comprised in the Bṛhatkathā, composed in the first or second century A.D., dwelling on incredible exploits of sailors, brigands, rogues and harlots outwitting kings and even gods. There are also the romances of Daṇḍin, Subandhu and Bāṇa, where we sometimes meet with complete rejection of morals though not of conscience, and always picturesque and impossible ruses and

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adventures. Along with these painting song and dance add to the enjoyment and embellishment. Important lyrical poets of the 7th century were Mayūra, Māgha and Bhartṛhari, who wrote vividly and ardently on love in its various nuances. These poets were followed by another distinguished poet, Amaru, in the 8th century. In the Mālavikāgnimitram we come across an actual dancing competition, and also a speech in which dancing is extolled as the divinest of all arts. The Gupta era also saw the composition of the Kamandakīya Nītisāra (3rd-4th century A.D.), that is mentioned by Bhavabhūti and Daṇḍin. Continuing the Kautilyan tradition of government and methods of administration, the Nītisāra comprises general maxims and aphorisms that gave it a high place among the Nītiśāstras. The treatise obtained wide recognition and reached even the island of Bali which was familiar with a Nītiśāstra and Kāmaṇḍakīya. Some scholars identify the author of Kamaṇḍakīya Nītisāra with Śikharasvāmin who was the prime-minister of Candragupta II, Vikramāditya.

The spontaneity, order and exuberance of life, thought and activity of the spacious age of the Guptas were abundantly reflected in its incomparable literature. Among all literary forms, it was the drama and the romance that bore little of the influences of foreign cultural currents that can be discerned by critics. The contact with the Hellenic world bore however richer fruit in the field of the positive sciences. Varāhamihira (who wrote about 550 A.D.) in his Pañcasiddhāntikā includes two Siddhāntas bearing foreign names viz., the Romaka which is connected with Rome, and is probably derived from Alexandria, and the Paulisa, probably derived from Paulus Alexandrinus. Greek ideas bore rich fruit, in the astronomical and mathematical systems of Varāhamihira, Āryabhaṭa, and later mathematicians. Here again, though India borrowed, she developed her own systems of astronomy, algebra and geometry which through Arab mathematics influenced the Western world. Āryabhaṭa (499 A.D.) was the greatest mathematician of the age, having used zero and decimals, extracted square and cube-roots and solved quadratic equations. Without the use of the telescope he calculated with some precision the position and movements of the planets. Brahmagupta who flourished at the time of Harṣa, was also the greatest astronomer-mathematician of the world in his time. He forestalled the discovery of the Newtonian law of gravitation. Within a century

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after his death, his Siddhanta was taken to Baghdad at the instance of Caliph Mansur for translation into Arabic. The Gupta age also saw a considerable development of medical science (cikitsā-vidyā). There were hospitals in the big cities and towns for both men and animals and the study of medicine was compulsory for all in the University of Nālandā as was mentioned by I-Tsing. The Chinese traveller refers to eight branches of medical science, practised by all physicians: (1) sores, inward and outward, (2) diseases above the neck and (3) below it, or bodily diseases, (4) demoniac diseases due to attack of evil spirits, (5) the Agada medicine i.e., antidote or medicine for counteracting poisons, (6) diseases of the children from the embryo stage to the sixteenth year, (7) the means of lengthening life, and (8) the methods of invigorating the legs and body. The traveller adds that any physician who is well versed in these never fails to live by the official pay. The surgical processes of cauterizing with fire or applying a puncture are also mentioned by I-Tsing. A most important medical work, Navanītakam, that extensively borrowed from past well-known texts such as the Charakasaṁhitā, the Śuśrutasaṁhitā and the Bhela-saṁhitā was composed in the Gupta period and a manuscript of this was found in Turkestan. Palakapya's Hastyāyurveda—a treatise dealing with elephant diseases was composed in the Gupta age. The famous Nāgārjuna was regarded by Hiuen-Tsang not only as a philosopher of the first rank but a great experimentalist in chemistry and metallurgy. The remarkable metallurgical skill achieved by Indian scientists and craftsmen is amply demonstrated by the treatment of iron in the famous Iron Pillar at Delhi. The Newton of the Gupta age was Varāhamihira whose knowledge in all the sciences and arts (Śilpasthāna-vidyā) from botany to astronomy and from metallurgy to civil engineering was encyclopædic. His famous Vṛhat-saṁhitā is an encyclopædia of the sciences and arts and stands as a monument of India's scientific genius and enterprise.

The transformation of the monastic creed of the Buddha to a worldly, institutional religion, the spread of devotionalism in all religions and sects, the growth of overseas trade, colonisation and intercourse, the change in economic structure due to the rise of a rich merchant and professional class, and above all, the establishment and consolidation of a powerful empire that symbolised national culture and resistance against hordes of invaders and barbarians proved extremely favourable for a clear definition of conventions

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and styles in literature as well as the fine arts, and ushered in the "classical" art of India. The Gupta period was essentially an age in which the people of India soared into the eternal and the abstract in all fields of life. The doctrines of universal sovereignty, associated with political expansion and unity of Āryāvarta, the Messianic hope of deliverance in all cults and creeds, the clarification of universal axioms and postulates of philosophy, the fruitful development of the positive sciences, the "classicism" in literature, sculpture and painting, the fictions of Varṇa-saṅkara and Kali-yuga and the entry of foreigners as new caste groups, and the mitigation of caste distance in law and practice are all distinctive attempts of Gupta India to reach out to the universal. These, indeed, comprise the abiding legacy India derives from Gupta culture that has moulded both the ideology and institutional set-up since that spacious Periclean age of Indian history.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE SPIRIT OF MAN IN INDIAN CLASSICAL ART

The Secularisation of Art

The Kushān art of Gāndhāra and Mathurā with its Hellenistic and Iranian traditions first started secularisation and fashioned the figure of the Buddha in India. But it was left for Gupta art to promote secularisation much further and embody man's supreme moral grandeur and beauty in the Buddha image. The major formative forces were the inspiration of folk cults and pastimes, illustrated in many Mathurā sculptures, such as the Flowering of the Aśoka and Kadamba Trees, Woman (Yaksi or Ganikā) Holding Lotus buds, Asoka Branches, a Drinking-bowl, a Bird or a Bird-cage and Bathing at the Water-fall, and the Woman and Child, the upsurge of devotion in Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism and the social and economic ferment of the Gupta period. Secularisation means in India something very different from Europe. Gupta art achieved the full possibilities of plastic expression of yoga, comprehended in the sense of the balance and integration of life (Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalaṃ). That which is serenity of mind in inner yoga or Being embodied itself in suave, classic and formal expression of all human relations—the entire realm of Becoming. Gupta art was the vehicle of universal myths and images of the cultural renaissance of Āryāvarta. It was secular art but expressed modes of universal consciousness. The teachings of the Buddha had definitely discouraged the making of the Buddha's image for worship and we have a reference in the Milinda-panha (about 1st century A.D.) to the general opinion forbidding the construction of images. Early Indian art, due to the prohibition of the making of the image of the Buddha, used a variety of symbols, such as the wisdom-tree, wheel, feet, triśūla and lotus, all derived from the Vedic myth and religion. On the one hand, Indian and hence Oriental art was profoundly enriched with abstract symbols and motifs due to the earlier iconoclastic attitude of Buddhism. Many of these were no doubt Vedic and Iranian but some were taken over by Indian art from the Near East. Secondly, though the

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imaging of the Buddha himself was prohibited, no such prohibition applied to the representation of the animals, in which forms the Buddha showed his courage, pity and self-sacrifice in his previous births. Thus Indian art early developed an ardent love of naturalism, and animal figures were depicted with great sympathy and tenderness.

The Unity of Aesthetic and Religious Experience

Both Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism, however, no doubt under the influence of Hellenism, soon settled the iconoclastic controversy by the recognition that the image is not significant in worship, but the supersensible Being or Subject incarnated in it. The Saddharmapuṇḍarīka observes, "The image merely as such is of no value, all depends on what he does who looks at it; what is expected of him is an act of contemplation such that when he sees before him the characteristic lineaments, it is for him as though the whole person of the Buddha were present; he journeys in spirit to the transcendent gathering on the Vulture Peak". Coomaraswamy adds: "Aesthetic and religious experience are here indivisible; rising to the level of experience intended, "his heart is broadened with a mighty understanding". Besides, if the Being or divinity is immanent in all things in nature, as both Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism now posited, art becomes an ideal vehicle of representation of the unity of all life. The rugged mountain faces in Ajantā in the Deccan or in Chien-Fo-tung, famous for the caves of the Thousand Buddhas, in the Chinese oasis, and in distant Yun-kang in Shansi, or, again, the vast temple walls in Borobodur in Java could not have been transformed by the presence of a thousand living forms including Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, angels, apsarās and adorers, but for the intense religious feeling of the oneness of all life through a multiplicity of forms, births and manifestations. The stones burst forth into exuberant life and dynamic energy in cave and temple from the lowest tier to the ceiling that literally became thickly inlaid and compact with forms of life, wholly concentrated upon the worship of the Buddha, the primordial essence of all manifestation. "The stones themselves are elevated to the rank of Buddha" wrote a Chinese poet.

Not merely was Buddhism associated with wide-spread and noble artistic construction in India, but as it travelled with the Indian monks and preachers along the ancient silk-route by way of the

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Central Asiatic oases or the sea-route by the Archipelago and Indo-China to China, it brought about an aesthetic revolution by mingling with Taoism and introducing into the religious and aesthetic life of the Chinese the major archetypes, symbols and motifs of India. On the main route from China and Central Asia to India at Bamyan, near Kabul, there were hewn out of the rocks in the first or second century A.D. two colossal Kuṣān images of the Buddha (175 feet and 120 feet high respectively) that looked placidly down for centuries upon thousands of Asian traders and pilgrims travelling along this highway to and from India. Taxilā, on the Asian highway, had also a considerable number of large monasteries and Buddhist paintings and sculptures, besides the celebrated tower of Kaniṣka containing the sacred relics. The spread of Buddhism to Central Asia, China, Burma, the East Indies, Siam and Cambodia completely transformed the indigenous art traditions, symbols and motifs of the various peoples, just as Christianity almost contemporaneously (3rd and 4th centuries) refashioned Mediterranean culture and art.

The Golden Age of Buddhist Art

This expansion of Mahāyāna Buddhist art was possible in the East because of the transformation of the earthly or historical Buddha into the transcendental Buddha or Being and the interpretation of iconography from the metaphysical and hence universal standpoint. The Buddha is no more individual teacher or Śākya Siṃha in Buddhist metaphysics and art. He is the primordial metaphysical principle of the universe, Being, "Who has entered into the Suchness" and has never left his eternal seat of meditation on the Vulture Peak at Rājagṛha. As the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka gave this metaphysical interpretation of the eternal character of the Buddha, of the Buddhahood in every creature that awaits realisation, Indian art entered its golden age.

No wonder this important Mahāyāna text, which was "a grand religious poem in itself", greatly stimulated Buddhist art. As Anesaki observes: "The apparition of the heavenly shrine, the hosts of the sanctified adoring Buddhas, the stories of miracles wrought by saints in the name of salvation, these and other topics were painted ceaselessly in a variety of scenes and compositions". The doctrine that the Buddha was a god above the gods, an eternal infinite Being spread from India to China and Japan, everywhere

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imbuing the people with an aspiration for universal communion, practised in conduct and expressed in art. On the other hand, in a foreign social climate, the migrating religion was itself largely transformed. Besides the metaphysical principle of Buddhahood (the Essence of all Buddha) there were stressed in China the cults of Maitreya and Amitābha, the easier tenets of the Paradise or Pure Land which was easier to reach for the faithful or believers in God's grace than through the difficult way of the Āryas. Thus the fresco-painter began to paint the Tusita and Sukhāvatī heavens, stimulating the faith and giving hope and assurance to the faithful. There was, of course, the human form of the Buddha or Śākyamuni; and the various episodes in his career, such as his encounters with poverty, disease and death, his farewell to his sleeping wife and his renunciation, were ardently depicted in both painting and sculpture. But the heavens of Maitreya and Amitābha far eclipsed in glory Gṛddhakūṭa or the Vulture Peak, loved and sanctified by the historical Gautama. The Paradise of the metaphysical Buddha was more resplendent than the site of Gautama's meditation. In religion and art Maitreya and Amitābha far outshone Gautama. Furthermore, in the early development of Chinese Buddhist art the peace and happiness of the Pure Land were more discernible than any threats of suffering in hell that were so much emphasised in the later centuries.

The march of Buddhist art from India to China, Korea and Japan, impelled across thousands of miles by a burning faith that produced altogether new lasting creations of art, can now be but dimly traced in the cave carvings in Bamiyan and Habak on the borders of Afghanistan, in the sand-buried cities of Balkh, Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan, in the grottos of Kucha, Kizil and Turfan, the remarkable remains in the caves of Tun-Huang and in the colossal sculptures at the Yun-Kang caves in Shansi. It was the profound adoration of the beloved Teacher and Healer, the Peerless Master of Our Caravan, that supplied the inspiration and vitality of Buddhist art. Well has Chavannes remarked that the distinction of Buddhist art lies in giving a "moral value to the human figure".

The Origin and Transformation of the Buddha Image—Symbol of Man's Moral and Intellectual Perfection

The French savant Foucher holds that it was probably in Gāndhāra under the influence of the Kushān kings that the first

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image of the Buddha was modelled as the result of collaboration between the Roman artist and the Indian Buddhist patron. The period of Kushān expansion and of the establishment of Greek potentates in different parts of Northern India was associated with those Greco-Roman influences that encouraged anthropomorphism in the early Buddhist art of Gāndhāra and Kapiśā. Here the Buddha or Bodhisattva image was carved as a model of Apollo and an Indian teacher or Scythian prince combind, seated not in the cross-legged Indian yogic posture but in European fashion bedecked with jewels and wearing a moustache. Modern scholars are however, of opinion that the Gāndhāra school came into existence only shortly before the accession of Kānishka in the second century A.D. Thus the earliest Gāndhāran images and the sculptures of Mathurā are almost contemporary or the latter are even earlier. Mookerji after sifting a good deal of evidence has come to the conclusion that it was not in Gāndhāra but probably in Mathurā that the earliest Buddha image was modelled, seated-cross-legged under the Bodhi-tree, true to the Indian yogī type. For this the sculptor of Mathurā had at his command, as Coomaraswami rightly points out, not only the visual image of the "Great Person" as defined in the Pāli texts, but also the tradition of the standing types of the colossal Yakṣas of the later centuries B.C., that are unmistakably linked with the succeeding colossal free standing Buddha and Bodhisattva images, and for the seated figure also a tradition, of which the beginning must have antedated the Śiva types of the Indus Valley culture of the third millennium B.C.

During the peace of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., Indian art traditions could come to their own, and the Romano-Buddhist Gāndhāran art was replaced by Gupta art—the natural culmination of ancient Indian art with its vivid appreciation of form, mass and rhythm and poise in rest and movement. Thus it was that the Buddha image was spiritualised in the new social climate of the Gupta empire, no longer disturbed by the chaos and unsettlement of the Kushān period, due largely to the influence of the indigenous Mathurā and Sārnāth schools of culture. The treatment of the Buddha is now characterised by a fine tracery of the monk's robe, rounded lines on the body, and a profoundly meditative face, the ensemble showing remarkable harmony, serenity and vigour. In striking contrast with the Romano-Buddhist types, there is the celebrated Sārnāth Buddha image commemorating the deliverance

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of his first sermon at Mṛgadāva in Benares. The Buddha is here shown in the attitude of discoursing the Wheel of the Law as well as the Master's five earliest disciples (together with woman donor of the image with her child) are appropriately carved on the pedestal. The composition is most delightful, breathing poise, profundity and sweetness that are stressed by horizontals, triangles and circles. The stable triangular pattern is overhung by the elaborately decorated circular nimbus. The hovering angles, deftly integrated into the nimbus, produce an atmosphere of ethereality. Nicety and simplicity of composition blend with a serene linear rhythm embodying the complete cessation of desire and perfect clarity. Thus did Gupta art for the first time in human culture invest the human figure with the highest moral value. Similarly the lofty Mathurā figure of the Buddha is one of the world's most significant symbols of man's moral and intellectual glory. Behind the half-closed eye-lids is hidden profound knowledge of the mystery of the world-process, while the benignant comprehending smile, not discernible in the more celebrated Sārnāth image, reconciles the impersonality of Nirvāṇa with the Master's profound pity for the world. The image, it should be remembered, is contemporaneous with the teaching of Mahāyāna idealism in Ayodhyā and is, in our view, one of its purest embodiments.

Kushan *versus* Indigenous Idiom in the Mathura and Sarnath Buddhas

The Ayodhyan school of Buddhist idealism has also gone into the making of the grand standing images of the Buddha of Sārnāth (one in the Sārnāth and the other in the Calcutta museum) and of the Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi—some of the noblest creations of Indian sculpture. Markedly different from the Mathurā representation in their deeper profundity and introspection as well as in their sterner treatment of mass and outline and emphasis of ovals and circles, these images also have none of the regular wavelike movement of the Buddha's diaphanous drapery, a motif which has gone far beyond the confines of India and has been imitated from Mathura by the art of Central Asia and Turkestan. The net effect is decidedly a greater inwardness, pointing to these as some of the earliest representations of the Great Ascetic (Mahāśramaṇa). These have their prototypes in the Buddha of Friar Bala, Sārnāth, of the early second century A.D., and the Buddha, so-called Bodhisattva

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from Bodh-Gayā (in the Calcutta museum) of the early fourth century A.D.,—both characterised by simple, restrained and yet vigorous piling up of mass upon mass integrated together by a sweeping, dynamic rhythm. The Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi is also decidedly more indigenous than the Mathurā image, with his matted locks resembling those of Sāranāth Lokeśvara or Śiva, though much more summarily treated, the hems of his garment more simply designed, and his feet delicately poised on the lotus blossoming amid its foliage. The image is hard to excel in its sheer clarity, balance and serenity. The gracious, hardly imperceptible smile, as in the Mathurā figure, along with a few rebellious curls and the necklace invest the image with youthful charm and sweet benignity. Sārnāth influenced profoundly the Eastern Indian school of art. The standing image of the Buddha from Biharail, Rajshahi, in Bengal in the early fifth century A.D., which is executed in Chunar sandstone shows the same concentrated inwardness as well as human warmth as the Sārnāth figure with a sinuous but disciplined linear treatment. This elegant image like the Sārnāth type has neither decorated nimbus nor the extremely thin stylised robe of the Mathurā figure. As in Sārnāth, so in Biharail, the robe covers both the shoulders, the thin incised lines indicating its folds. Bengal very early deviated from the Kushān idiom of Mathurā and had its own variant of the Gupta idiom with a dynamic rhythm and broad smooth modelling of the figure for the expression of silence as well as refined grace.

The Classicism of Gupta Art

Mathurā and Sārnāth have been the perennial springs of Indian classical plastic expression, abstract, perspicuous and suave. Indian classical art was however by no means only supramundane. The classicism of Gupta art no doubt lies in its clear definition of the synthesis between the earlier popular cults of Yakṣa and tree-worship, Buddhist and Jain heresies and Brāhmaṇical renaissance, all welded together by the upsurge of Bhāgavatism as well as by the new literary and scholastic traditions of the period. The Gupta age, though the age of nationalism, was marked by cultural synthesis promoted by the peace, might and prosperity of the Gupta Empire and the renewed intercourse with the Roman, Iranian and Chinese worlds. Art, like literature, fully records this synthesis. The unsophisticated charms of the Yakshiṇīs on the railing

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pillars at Mathurā are reproduced but with refinement and stern discipline of surface and outline in the tribhanga poses of the Godesses Tārā, Gaṅgā and Yamunā, of Māra's seductive daughters and the Gandharvas and maiden chowri-bearers in Gupta sculpture. The exquisite ornamentation of the lotus prabhā maṇḍala (padmātapatra chhāyā maṇḍala, in the words of Kālidāsa), the differentiated modelling of the monk's transparent robe and the sensitive naturalistic treatment of the feminine body with prominence of breasts and hips and profusion of jewellery are all on a par with the imageries and linguistic embellishments of Kālidāsa, Bhāravi and Bhavabhūti in grand style. Buddhism, Jainism and Brāhmaṇism as well as folk cult found their gods and goddesses, spirits of the woods and waters, serpents, streams and phalli not in antagonism with, nor in segregation from one another but all assimilated and integrated together by the metaphysical mind and the syncretic art and religion of this age. And if any one still thinks that the message of art was only religious he has only to look below the cult-image even of the Buddha to the pedestal with its standing dragons and sitting lions amalgamated into one pair of fanciful romping creatures, or to the elaborate Arabasque carvings of typical intertwined creepers with leaves fluttering in exuberant display subserving the general decorative pattern of the temple. There was also as much emphasis upon narration as upon the cult; the stories of the Jātakas, the Purāṇas and the epics found their representation in unending series of elegantly carved panels, where the secular and the religious slipped into each other. The humanistic note of Gupta art is embodied in the popular aphorism, "Beauty is never intended for evil" (Rūpaṁ pāpavṛttaye na), which Kālidāsa quotes with approval in Kumārasambhava (v, 36). The poet also remarks that beauty is only intended for the liking of the husband (Priyeshu saubhāgya phalā hi cārutā) Kumārasaṁbhava (v. 1). The norm that the beautiful is the good dominates life, manners and art in the Gupta age. The Buddha vanquishing the armies of Māra and Śiva burning to ashes Kāma as the fair Pārvatī disturbs his serene contemplation (Kumārasambhava III, 72) represent the great myths of the Gupta age; while the self-immolation of the Bodhisattva before the tigress and its Hindu counterpart, the sacrifice of Dilīpa before the lion as it pounces upon the cow Nandinī under his protection, epitomize its spirit of service and renunciation. The classicism of Gupta art springs from the Gupta social and cultural

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ideal combining discipline with enjoyment, renunciation with obligation and wisdom with beauty.

The Gupta age witnessed the secularisation of the state and society under the impetus of vast economic change and accumulation of wealth and the absorption of congeries of foreigners into the Hindu social hierarchy. The rich merchant and official class aspired after release from the bondage and suffering of saṁsāra, and yet did not forget fellowman nor sentient creature. Such were the large-heartedness and altruism of the age. On the base of the image of the Bodhisattva Padmapaṇi at Sārnāth we read: "Om. This is the pious gift of the lay-member Suyātra, the head of a district (Vishayapati). Whatsoever merit there is in this gift, let it be to the acquirement of supreme wisdom by all sentient beings". Gupta classical art freely drew upon secularism and realism, but at the same time regulated these without loss of vitality according to the new scholastic canons of abstract beauty. It, indeed, created the iconography of Buddhism, Jainism and Brāhmaṇism and reached to the masses the message of great religious and social movements. At the same time it showed a new sensibility to the beauty of the human body, especially the rhythmic quality of the feminine body, and developed artistic norms, conventions and formulae that in their refinement and clear definition governed the art construction of half of Asia for many centuries. Mere canon and formula cannot however make an art true and noble. Gupta art in imaging the figures of the Buddha, Bodhisattva, Viṣṇu and Śiva or the goddesses, angels and women superbly combines abstract and symbolic with sculptural values. Saturated as it is with the serenity, humanism and universality of Kṛṣṇa-and Buddha-Bhāgavatism, it is marked by an accent of idealistic poise and balance. It redounds to a greater glory that the sculpture, while expressing the metaphysical, shows a profound appreciation of light and dark values in significant forms, a dynamic rhythm of composition and a spontaneous beauty and economy of linear treatment that bridge the gulf between man's affective state and the state of suprasensible wisdom. It is these qualities which make Gupta sculpture a unique contribution to the world history of art.

Interfusion of Cosmic and Personal Sentiments in Gupta Brahmanical Art

It must not be supposed that Gupta sculpture did not deal with

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Brāhmaṇical motifs and subjects. Both the Viṣṇu and Śiva of Bhāgavatism were also modelled with poise and charm, vigour and fineness. If Mahāyāna idealism and compassion for world misery have given India the sublime images of the Bodhisattva at Sārnāth, Mathurā and Ajantā, the intense Kṛṣṇa-bhakti in the same epoch similarly embodied itself in the magnificent images of Viṣṇu at Mathurā and Aihole, of Viṣṇu's rescue of Gajendra, and of Nara-Nārāyaṇa at Deogarh, reconciling the impersonality of Brāhmaṇ with Vishṇu's profound tenderness for jīva, "which has no other refuge in the seven worlds". Two important episodes of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa's rescue of his devotees that assumed great prominence in the latter Bhakti literature were carved with great feeling in the Gupta period and immediately after viz., the deliverance of the King of Elephants at the Deogarh temple (about 600 A.D.) and the Undavalli cave in the Deccan and the slaying of Hiraṇya kaśipu and rescue of Prahlāda by the Man-lion Avatāra at the Daśāvatāra cave at Ellora (8th century). The grace of Govinda rescuing the elephant from the clutches of the crocodile runs parallel to the Bodhisattva's redeeming love for animals in his many previous births, and is superbly expressed in the Lord's compassionate attitude towards the elephant in profound adoration in the sculpture. The angels above dance in joy at the Lord's answer to his devotee's cry. The Ellora sculpture of the deliverance of Prahlāda is characterised by a far greater tenseness of the scene, the fury and majesty of the Lord's wrath and Hiraṇyakaśipu's shrinking acceptance of death. In the Daśāvatāra cave, there is also represented a Śaiva counterpart of the Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavata episodes—the rescue of Śiva's devotee Mārkaṇḍeya whom the god of Death is about to drag off to his dark abode when Śiva springs out of the liṅga and delivers him.

Religion and art, Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical, speak with the same fervour of devotionalism. The picture of Śiva in yogic meditation in Kālidāsa's Kumārsambhava has an affinity with the seated Buddha image in Buddhist art, just as the serenity and piety of the Bodhisattvas of Mahāyāna Buddhism reiterate themselves in the profound tranquility and sweetness of the Vishṇu images and the Śiva-mukha-liṅgas of Gupta sculpture. Gupta art, for the first time, also tackled some of the basic Brāhmaṇical cosmogonic and metaphysical concepts, and the stones of Udayagiri, Mandasor, Bhitargaon and Deogarh were elevated to ontology and metaphysics.

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There is, for instance, in Udayagiri one of the grandest representations of a cosmical event—the creation of the Earth which is rescued from the waters by the Boar-God. The colossal rock-cut relief, simple, massive and monumental, over-reaches the size of the wall, thronged with gods, men, saints and demons. The surrounding lotus decorative motifs, the flowing garland as well as the loin cloth, with its three folds hanging down vertically, serve to balance the composition as Vishṇu, by the sheer weight of his ponderous body, lifts up the Earth that resigns herself to this fateful moment and, as she rises, delicately places her feet on a lotus bud. On the plane of history this magnificent image records Emperor Candragupta II Vikramāditya's rescue of India from chaos and confusion as the nearby images of Gangā-Yamunā in the same cave indicate his conquest of Middle India. There may, if Viśākhadatta's drama 'Devīcandraguptam' is to be believed, even a more direct reference to Candragupta rescuing Dhruva Devī, his brother Rāmagupta's wife, later on his consort, who was cowardly offered by her imbecile husband to the Śaka invader in exchange of peace in the realm. In the same cave, there is the magnificent image of Vishṇu reclining in the cosmic waters representing another cosmical event—the silence before creation or withdrawal of the soul into meditation. The fixity of meditation is stressed by the severe horizontality of the reclining image, the flattening of physiognomy and the repetition of the coils of the mythical Serpent Ananta, symbolising eternity. Not far from Udayagiri, at a place called Pathari, there is a temple containing a massive relief on the nativity of Kṛṣṇa who lies by the side of his mother Devakī watched by four attendants. This is one of the finest and largest specimens of Indian sculpture. The serene happiness of the mother is stressed by the horizontals of the reclining figure and its summary treatment as well as by the reiterated verticalism of the stiff-limbed maidens standing in vigil with their chowries. Here is a representation of the generic archetype of motherhood into which cosmic rather than individual emotions and attitudes have been introduced. Reference may be made here to another cosmic image found near Aligarh, of the triple-faced Vishṇu, with right and left faces those of the Lion and the Boar incarnation, and with a large circular nimbus depicting the nine planets (Nava-graha), the twin stars (Aśvinīkumāras) and the four sons of Brahmā as well as Agni. The Gupta age saw the synthesis of the sectarian god, Kṛṣṇa or Vāsudeva, the object of adoration

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of the Bhāgavatas, with the Vedic deity Vishṇu who is associated with the sun and the life of the cosmos and takes three strides in the sky and pervades the whole cosmos, and also with his Purāṇic avatāras—Nṛsiṁha and Varāha. The composite image, representing the sky with the various gods and the three faces of Vishṇu, comprises a highly interesting example of iconographic reconciliation. The clarity and tranquillity of the four-armed Mahā- Vishṇu in the centre, with his gorgeous mukuṭa, are in striking contrast with the movements in the sky and the dynamisms of the Lion and Boar faces. The Trimūrti Mahā-Vishṇu is the Bhāgavata counterpart of the Trimūrti Māheśvara of the Śaivas, equally significant in the Gupta age. Another cosmic image of Vishṇu is the god in his Dwarf incarnation suddenly assuming an indefinite dimension to the discomfiture of Vāli. As early as the sixth century A. D. we find at Bādami the sculpturing of Vishṇu Trivikrama in the rock-cut cave. The fury and majesty of the cosmic god are expressed by the colossal size and heaviness of the figure underlined by the verticals of his mace, sword and bow and of the heavy cylindrical mukuṭa, all placed against the asymmetrical horizontal projection from the cave-ceiling. The small, delicate and supple bodies of the supplicating gods and godesses to whom Vishṇu pays no attention are in marked contrast with the tense, momentous occasion of the triumph over the Asura-god Vāli. Vishṇu's three steps symbolise the sky, the ether and the earth, whence darkness is dispelled or the daily rise, movement across the meridian and setting of the sun. The Trivikrama figure of Vishṇu embodying a cosmic myth has since the Gupta period been executed in many temples of India, such as Mahavallipuram, Ellora and elsewhere in the later centuries.

Bhagavatism and Art

Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism accordingly inspired some of the best specimens of Indian art during the Gupta period. The temples of Pathari, Deogarh, Bhitargaon and Mandasor contain some of the best images of Vishṇu and Kṛṣṇa. We may refer here only to the image of Nārāyaṇa as the supreme self, one in two, revealing the profound metaphysical doctrine, expounded in the Bhagavadgītā, the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata, the Bhāgavata and the Pancarātra, of the identity of the immediate, fragmentary self and the eternal Self (Nara-Nārāyaṇa or Kshara-Akshara). Nara is the individual self and Nārāyaṇa is Vishṇu, the goal of

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mankind. Nara and Nārāyaṇa were in ancient literature two eminent ṛṣis and great ascetics; later on Nara was identified with Arjuna and Nārāyaṇa with Vasudeva-Krishna, both being worshipped together as deities. Here are two very similar images, both of Self—the four-handed one is Nārāyaṇa or Purushottama, the omnipresent ruler of the Universe (Iśvara or transcendent), and the other is Jīva-Ātman who dwells in every human soul (Antaryāmī, or immanent Īśa of the Bhagavad-gītā), imaged in the attitude of ratiocination. By the power of yoga Hari also creates his own double or multiple. Seldom does art so eloquently represent a metaphysical truth—the reconciliation of the notions of transcendence and immanence. It is rare that in sculpture intervening empty spaces (as between the two Selves—the mutable and the immutable and between their large limbs) as well as parallels and horizontals are so effectively utilised for an emphasis of poise and fulfilment. The two ascetic figures carved with melting softness and largeness, suitable for the luxuriant modelling of nudes, appear as everlasting exponents of the mood of perfect self-absorption and help each other both artistically and psychologically in the consolidation of that mood. They both breathe prajñānam (wisdom) and śāntam (tranquillity) recorded by a combination of restraint and amplitude in modelling and the large expansive rhythm of the ensemble. On the top the brisk movement of the flying angels is in sharp contrast with the serenity of the scene of contemplation on the earth. In the same temple we have in another panel the representation of Vishṇu as the Eternal, sleeping on the Cosmic Serpent that symbolises Time (Ananta-śāyīn) and also Kṛṣṇa delivering the Lord of Elephants (Gajendra-moksha) saturated with the piety and devotion of, Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism. On the lower panel of Vishṇu-Anantaśāyī we see carved images of the Pañca Pāṇḍavas with Draupadī, all Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatas, that in their tender devotion (bhakti) remind one of the disciples of the Buddha in the sculptures at Amarāvati and Borobodur.

The Frescoes of Ajanta and Bagh—Influence of Satavahana Art of Sanchi and Amaravati

Like Gupta sculpture, Gupta painting reached a marvellous phase of development, unique in the history of art, and commands even greater admiration. Ajantā and Bagh painting shows a most harmonious blend of ethereality and supernatural atmosphere with

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the joyousness of the senses. Its methods and techniques have guided not only Indian but Oriental art through the centuries. The identification of the worldly and contemplative life, which underlies the universal quality of Gupta painting, is itself the result of the Mahāyāna world-interpretation that effects the spiritual transformation of saṁsara and exalts it. Thus we discern in the frescoes as much piety and tender human sadness as the beauty and sensuous perfection of the feminine form in an astonishing variety of postures and moods. The essence of Mahāyāna faith—the unity, wholeness and pervasiveness of life, finds in Ajantā and Bagh, grand, classic expression in painting. Over the panorama of a unified universe in which gods, gandharvas, kinnaras, animals and creatures of the nether land jostle together through a continuous sequence of births and deaths, broods the profound piety of the Bodhisattva—the magic apparition of the Buddhist middle ages of Asia. The dramas of human love and separation, happiness and suffering, passion and compassion, the movements of armies, the gatherings at the royal courts, the sports of animals, the processions of ants in search of the tree-sap as well as the sacred happenings in the previous lives of the Buddha, are all there set within an acosmic frame; the sense of the unity of all life and its transience and futility weave them all into a single, palpitating pattern of Life and Craving.

The Ajanta frescoes are distributed over sixteen out of twenty nine caves and cover the entire period of classic Indian painting from the 2nd century B.C. to the 7th century A.D.—about a whole millennium. In the world history of art there is nothing comparable with this unique gallery. Unfortunately preservation both in quality and number is markedly disparate in the different caves. Not merely is the chronology of the art works that belong to successive epochs and styles uncertain, but the excellent preservation of paintings of some caves and paucity and damaged condition in others are apt to warp the judgment in respect of style and development. The earliest frescoes belong to the 2nd century B.C., and are found in caves nine and ten, executed under the Sātavāhana Empire. The highest perfection seems to have been achieved in the art works in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D., due to the combined cultural influences from the Gupta and Vākāṭaka realms. The marked features of the earlier Bharhut and Sanchi art are clearly discernible at Ajanta in the representation of the Chaddanta

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and Syama Jātakas. Amarāvati has also left its impress upon the refined sensuousness and Botticellian grace in the figures of princely men and their nude women, slender and yet vibrant, tender and elegant and yet never sensual and unchaste. Thus Bharhut and Sanchi from the north and Amarāvati from the south have contributed towards the creative spirit and tradition of Ajanta. Yet we find a new refinement and delicacy as well as range of human expression and a romantic love for nature and animal life that in association with a superb linear treatment and dynamic sweep of colours makes the Ajanta frescoes the grandest art creations of India. The representation of the moving herd of elephants in the forest and of the solicitude of the king and his attendants for the fainting queen Subhadrā shows rare observation, sympathy and earth-boundedness that are all lifted to another plane by the Mahāyāna piety, compassion and idealism. With unusual charm and delicacy are also depicted the tender affection of the blind hermit parents and the filial attachment of the boy Bodhisattva in the background of the forest with the running antelopes that used to accompany him whenever he went down to the river to fetch water. The scene represented is from the Syama Jātaka. The paintings of episodes in the Chaddanta and Syama Jātakas belong to the Sātavāhana period when India through maritime activity and commerce in her Deccan ports, Vaijayanti and Kalyāni, and the eastern port of Amarāvati experienced a new cosmopolitanism and humanism. The naturalism, piety and sense of rhythm of the reliefs of Sanchi, the famous stūpa of the Sātavāhana Empire, mingle here with the freedom, elegance and subtlety of expression that characterise the mature phase of Ajanta art.

The Gupta Commingling of Alaka and Tushita Heaven

Gupta art from Sārnāth, Mathurā, Vidisā and Ujjain (which is only 170 miles from Ajanta) powerfully influenced Ajanta figuration possibly after the marriage of Prabhāvatī Guptā, daughter of Candragupta II with Rudrasena II and her regency. Most of the frescoes indeed belong to the art idiom of the Gupta age with its wealth, power and luxury expressing themselves in the fashion and jewellery of queens, the pomp and voluptuous langour of kings and the love-making of Yaksha couples in Àlakā that Kālidāsa loved to dwell upon. In fact the amorous poses of the Ajanta lovers, the husband with the beloved on his lap indulging in madhupāna

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are reminiscent of Kalidāsa's verses in the Raghuvaṁśa (iv, 36). Yet the Gandharva world pictured in the poems of Aśvaghosha and Kālidāsa amidst the snow-capped, mystical Himalayan heights, with the clouds floating about as messengers that stirred the imagination of the frescoe painters mingles harmoniously with the asceticism and mystical wonderment of the Lalitavistāra, the Buddha-carita and the Jātakamālā. This full-toned blending is really the crux of Indian classic painting. It could never have been reached by the exclusive emphasis of the Arhat ideal so eloquently represented in figures of the Brāhmaṇ or Sramaṇa, or of the divine Buddha and Bodhisattva ideal. The charm and ethereality of the Ajanta figures were indeed derived from the happy marriage of Mahāyāna idealism with the fervour of classical Sanskrit Kāvya. The Himalayan paradise of romantic poetry and the Tushita heaven of the Buddhist faith both lent their grace and subtlety of expression to the Ajanta figuration of true human grandeur. All enduring poetry in world literature is impregnated with a noble purpose and impulsion. We find in the ethereal and tender forms at Ajanta the validity of the same principle illustrated in the realm of the visual arts. Truly, the most abundant spirit of humanity, love and compassion ever experienced in human history mould the art technique, value and temper at Ajanta and account for its far-reaching influence on the art of Wei and Tang China, and of Middle and South-east Asia in the succeeding centuries. These ideals were leavened by the same broad humanism and stress of social and moral obligations along with the mystical yoga contemplation that we find in Kālidāsa's kāvyas, and that mirrored forth the requirements of the age of urbanisation, commerce, colonisation and assimilation of hordes of foreigners and Mlecchas. Several ethnic strains can be discerned in the Ajanta figures, Deccani, North Indian, Parasika, Tartar and Bhil, and sometimes we find the dark strain achieving social eminence and representing the elite. The liberalism of the age is reflected also in the presence of the West Asiatic and Romano-Buddhist motifs, Greek cupids, and half-bird and half-woman monsters and Iranian heraldic animals in some frescoes and animal friezes.

The Balance between Samsara and Nirvana

Ajanta is only four miles from the principal southern trade-route from Northern India via Ujjain and Mahishmati to Pratis-

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thana and Amaravati. The great emporia of Bhṛgu-kachcha and Surparaka on the Arabian sea are also not far distant and connected with the same arterial line of communication. Bagh is situated between the Vindhyas on the ancient highway from Malwa to Sourashtra. Sixty miles east is Mahishmati, where the road to the Deccan crosses the river. Between the paintings of Ajanta and those of Bagh, the resemblance is unmistakable. We have the same emphasis of naturalism and joy of life combined with the same formal values—the vigour and delicacy of lines, the dynamic sweep of simple mellow colours and the organicity of composition. But what survives in Bagh shows even a warmer human sensitiveness, a less sophisticated and subtler expression of moods by refined gesture, quick glance of the eye or delicate movement of hands and feet. Bagh is certainly more palpitating with human emotions and less austere than Ajanta, concerned as it is not with the lives of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva, but with the religious life and rites of the common people of the day, including the performanee of a hallisaka dance by a troupe of women musicians led by a strangely attired man. Yet an inexpressible dignity and serenity pervade the atmosphere.

Though monasteries, Ajanta and Bagh felt the full pulse of the humanism of the age, focalised in the Imperial Gupta court of Ujjaini and the later Gupta regime of Malwa. Thus we have along with the tales of the Jātakas and the episodes in the life and death of the Buddha depicted with profound pathos, the descent of the Buddha from the Tushita heaven, the visit of the king of Magadha, the conversion of Nanda, the dying princess (some-times identified with Nanda's deserted queen), the king with his queens and soldiers before the Bodhi tree, the toilet of queens, dance, music and banquet, the Sassanian Persian embassy to the court of Pulakesin, or the landing of Vijaya Siṁha in Lanka, all in grand, sensuous style. In some frescoes we indeed find the exaggerated feeling for feminine grace and loveliness, the extravagant display of limbs and jewellery, the stilted behaviour of the nāgarikas and the care-free love-making, associated with the rich and sophisticated class of princes, merchants and officials of the Gupta age subduing in some measure the mystical interpretation. The pomp and pageantry of the life of princes and the nobility are no doubt depicted with eclat. This is not surprising since Gautama is the king of kings and super-human (lokottara), and in his successive births

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exhibits the pāramitas as kings and princes, such as Śivi and Visvantara, and as lords of the animal herds. The Buddha says: "I am neither man, Yaksha or Gandharva", and his princely state is but an accident in the wheel of the universe. In the moving drama of life what is significant is not man's social status, prestige or power but his śīla (conduct) and dāna (charity) which finds emphasis in the technique of the figuration by means of discriminative size and pigment. The great Bodhisattva is easily the most charming and the largest-limbed. He wears the royal mukuṭa, like his queen on his left, and is painted in the royal reddish yellow colour with that ecstatic delight and adoration that one comes across in the contemporary impassioned hymns of Śāntideva's Śikshā-Samuccaya (7th century A.D.) that the painters must have been familiar with. There is a subtle difference at Ajanta in the figuring of the Buddha and of the Bodhisattva; the former is more serene, immaculate and impersonal, having obtained the placidity of Nirvāṇa so beautifully rendered by the poise and stability of the seated yogic meditative pose; the latter is youthful, radiant with compassion and goodwill for all and figured in a standing or relaxed seated posture whose gliding compositional rhythms express the deep and gracious solicitude of one who has taken the vow that he shall not enter into Nirvāṇa before all creatures of the world are liberated. The austerity of the Wanderer Buddha and the luxury of the ever-compassionate, ever-charitable Bodhisattva are on a par with the Buddhist myth that identifies bodhi with kleśa, supreme illumination with universal compassion. In the Ajanta frescoes there is no elite of wealth and power but only the aristocracy of pāramitas. And the pāramitas are to be found in every rank of society. The Brāhmaṇa and the Śramaṇa are painted with special devotion and reverence for they are the Bodhisattvas to be. We have in the frescoes also remarkable scenes of the hermitage, breathing an atmosphere of naivette and austerity, and of hunting and folk-life in the setting of the beauties of nature, where dress is plain and manners unsophisticated and behaviour and gestures bear the authentic stamp of rustic simplicity. The social climate of the frescoes is indeed harmoniously set within the traditional setting of India's natural plant, animal and human scenes and movements. For the Bodhisattvas live and move in the actual social milieu of India in forests and cities that have become places or pilgrimage for the Buddhist brotherhood, and enter into

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positive social relations with the concrete world of men and women, birds and animals under the sunshine and cloud of the Indian scene, illumined by the ineffable light of his compassion and wisdom. On the whole, Ajanta exquisitely epitomises and symbolises the harmony between the worldly and the spiritual, the earthy and the divine.

The qualities of earthiness and sensuousness in Ajanta paintings are subordinated to the same literary norms of abstract beauty that govern Kaḷidāsa's conceptions of human charm and elegance; the amplitude of forms and gestures is ordered by dramatic expressiveness, and the moving pageantry of life subdued by the dominant conception that every episode of life is human and divine simultaneously. The scenes of human passion and sorrow and the supreme ordeals of the Bodhisattva triumphing over human wickedness by his gentleness, compassion and goodwill symbolise in Mahāyāna thought the nature and destiny of saṁsāra to which deliverance is vouchsafed by the infinite wisdom and charity of the Bodhisattva. Saṁsāra and Nibbāna thus slip into each other, and Ajanta art derives its sincerity, pathos and enchantment from this beatific Mahayāna vision of the human spirit. The most outstanding examples that shine among the great masterpieces of Ajanta pictorial art are those depicting the blind hermit parents with their child, welded together by marvellous expression of tender pathos; the collapse of the delicate, charming princess with the spectre of imminent death leaving her unruffled amidst the bewilderment of her youthful attendants; the meeting of Yaśodharā and Rāhula with the Buddha after his Enlightenment, dominated by their mixed feeling of expectancy and of reckoning the spiritual status of the Master; and the king's punishment of the beautiful prostrate woman, with her hands touching his feet in trembling supplication.

The Revelation of Mahayana Idealism and Ethics in Art

Such art traditions are the climax of many centuries of training and experience of guilds of artists, many of whom were both painters and sculptors who strove collectively for generations to express a common faith. The dominant ideology of a whole millennium, provided here by the Mahayāna myth, is the unity and solidarity of all existence in a cosmic scheme of action and interaction of karma through the successive births and re-births of the Bodhisattva. Now the Bodhisattva appears as an elephant, now

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as a monkey, a deer or a goose, now a nāga, now a poor man, a son of hermit and finally as a super-man (mahāpurusha), recollecting and epitomising all his inexhaustible pity and compassion to all sentient beings. It is this which underlies the pervading sympathy with the life of plants and flowers, trees and animals, and with the life of men, women and children, saints and beggars, nāgas and deities in all stages and situations. Neither wickedness nor greed nor revenge nor envy can be outside the range of the all-pervasive charity that goes to the making of the Bodhisattva. It is this spiritual sense of solidarity and continuity which explains the telescoping of episodes and scenes into one another, helping to distil the essence of the gospel of compassion. What is apparently an absence of logic of design is the real tour de force of the Ajanta frescoes with their instinctive multiple time and space perspective. There are here not only naivette and spontaneity of composition that we often miss in the calculated designs of the Western masterpieces, but every form of expression, tree, flower, insect, bird, animal, man, nāga, gandharva, god or angel is also treated with the utmost ardour and reverence as the authentic expression of the Buddha-nature that passes through the entire sequence of life-forms in the universe. The joy and radiance of the paintings reflect the ordered pattern of the metaphysical reality on which India pins her faith.

Ajanta in the secluded monastery of a mountain valley, sheltered from the toil and strife of life, is no doubt eloquent of the all-pervasive joy and blessedness of life that Mahāyāna Bhāgavatism imported into the dry bones of Hinayāna morals and metaphysics. The Buddhist world was illumined with a sudden wave of delight. It is the apparition of Padmapāṇi, Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya, Manjusrī and other compassionate Buddhas. The gorgeous panorama of the Ajanta paintings, the 'aerial chaples' and the 'lovely palaces with their pillars gleaming with jewels and resounding with the songs of thousands of apsaras', verdant forests filled with the scent of wood-bine flowers, 'the lakes adorned with lotuses and decked with geese' derive their radiance from the new devotionalism that finds in them the precious gifts to the Merciful One. We have here used phrases which actually occur in the popular litany of Śāntideva who offers the richest gifts of the earth to the Bodhisattva. Such is the spirit of the mystical Mahāyāna poetry of Śāntideva that is full of the sensuousness of Kālidāsa, but embodies an ardent, even ecstatic consecration of the delights and pleasures of the world

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as offerings to the Bodhisattva, who in his turn must possess these in order to show to the world supra-human charities that lead to his attainment of omniscience.

It is the new Bhāgavatism that really explains the profound joy of the Ajanta painters in limning the most beautiful things on the earth, palaces, pageants and jewellery, the soft caresses of chaste lovers, the melodic grace and loveliness of women in their variegated moods and gestures, the immaculate purity of the Brāhmaṇs and Bhikkus, the wantonness of children at play and the prolific growth of sāl and mango trees, lotuses and fruits, dedicated as all these are to the Great compassionate Ones. The following hymns of Śāntideva of Valabhi best exemplify the spirit of Ajanta and its vision of the "Beautiful Bodhisattva". "All the flowers and fruits and simples, all the treasures of the universe, the pure and delicious waters, the mountains made of precious gems, the solitudes of the woods, the wood-bine gleaming with its finery of flower, the trees whose branches bend under the weight of their fruits, the perfumes of the divine and human worlds, the trees of wishes and the trees of precious stones, the lakes adorned with lotus and decked with swans, the wild and cultivated plants and the countless beauties scattered throughout the immensity of space, all these things which belong to no one, I take them in spirit and offer them to the Great Saints and to their Sons. May they, who are worthy of the finest offerings, accept them. May they have pity on me, they, the Great Compassionate Ones! Behold! a shower of lotuses rains down, mingled with scented water. What bliss! Under its deluge the fire of the hells is seen to die down. 'What is this?' ask the damned with a sudden wave of delight. 'It is the apparition of Padmapāṇi! May it show itself to us!'

The Spirit of Asanga

Over the marvellous things of beauty and enjoyment of the earth painted in the frescoes broods the spirit of the Mahāyāna Yogācāra idealism founded by Asanga, who found retreat in the monastery of Ajanta and declared that the world was no more than the dream of dreams. Not merely the world but also thought is ephemeral, a perpetual series of moments. Even the universal subconscious basis of all, the ālaya vijñāna, is in perpetual flux, arising and perishing, carrying with it all kleśa and activities, and preventing sentient creatures from passing out of existence. The Great

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Deliverer is the Bodhisattva. To the Bodhisattva so reverentially painted in Ajanta and Bagh, Asanga pays his homage thus: "Thou art free from every obstacle, thou hast mastery over the whole world, O Muni, thou occupiest all the knowable by thy knowledge, thy thought is liberated. Thou hast achieved the transcendent way. Thou hast gone out from the whole earth, thou hast become the Captain of all beings, thou art the Liberator of all beings".

It is obvious that the very emphasis of the gifts and pleasures of life, wealth and power, beauty and youth that belong to the Bodhisattva in the frescoes of Ajanta underlines their impermanence and the quest for the "veiled truth". (Samvṛtti satya). Let the Mahāyāna poet speak, "Life's cares, if thou regardest them, are like dreams and as the plantain's branches, in reality there is no distinction between those that are at rest and those that are not at rest. Since then the forms of being are empty, what can be gained, and what lost? Who can be honoured or destroyed and by whom? Whence should come joy or sorrow?"

The Formal Values of Ajanta Art

This over-all frame of reference, myth and ideology created its own set of formal values that are contributions of India to the world history of paintings: decisive and vigorous but subtle and delicate lines; a plastic sense in figuration underlined by the interplay of lights and shades; a sense of movement along with roundness and relief communicated by the repetition of figures with their swaying limbs in a crowd or procession in somewhat Cezannean landscapes; simple but consummate colour schemes; and smooth dynamic rhythm of composition on a grand scale unrestricted by any rigid demarcation of frames. The dominating note of composition of the Ajanta frescoes is the flowing rhythm of swarming figures, gods, angels, animals and plants in vital communion with one another. This is born of India's ancient sense of the unity and compositeness of life which had its first impress upon Bharhut and Sanchi reliefs.

In well-balanced patterns of colours, usually browns, relieved by blue, crimson, white and green, trees, flowers, animals, men and spirits are marvellously and intricately interwoven as in a colourful fabric of numerous folds, markedly resembling the magnificent rhythmic colour schemes of the murals of Rivera and Orozco.

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There is also a remarkable geometrical quality discernible in the pliant, graceful and elusive human forms as one meets with in the Mexican frescoes. But Ajanta figures exhibit formal geometric values associated not with passion and agitation but with serenity and poise that are reiterated in Indian dancing. Yet the painting as an ensemble gives the impression of an exuberant vitality that is spilled on all sides and cannot be contained within the various colour areas separated by the cleft rocks and architectural motifs. Due to the skilful gradation of tones, the careful distribution of spaces and the fluent composition of the countless forms, real and fanciful, all nature seems to be vibrant with life that seems to issue forth from the walls of the caves, dance across the pillars and sweep through the ceilings. The composition at Ajanta has no rigid bounds and often moves from wall to wall until it encounters rock cleft and architectural motif, but is focalised round certain calm, detached, majestic and reiterated figures of the Bodhisattva as man or as beast, thus lending a poise and serenity to the whole scene. Witnessed by a throng of devotees in the caves in their shimmering darkness, the frescoes, the spectators and the cave interior become all fused into one collective thrill of religious ecstasy. Ideal as well as formal elements in their sum total contribute towards making some of the world's best art creations.

Influence of Ajanta on the Spread of Buddhism

Just as Aśvaghosha's Buddhacarita and Āryasūra's Jātakamālā, described by I-tsing as the popular books of Buddhism in the age, supplied the inspiration of the scenes from Buddha's life in the frescoes, some of which quote the latter's verses, so the tender ecstatic songs in the Śikshā-samuccaya of Śāntideva, probably a contemporary of the Ajantā painters, animated the beatific visions of Mañjuśrī or Padmapāṇi, the ever-compassionate beautiful Bodhisattvas at Ajantā. The art of Ajantā and Bāgh is saturated with the mystical doctrine of the Asaṅgas and Vasubandhus and with the all-pervasive charity, compassion and humanism of the Buddhist mendicant order that sped in four directions; and wherever Mahāyāna Buddhism travelled it foreshadowed the same art pattern. The Chinese pilgrims to India in the Buddhist middle ages were, therefore, as much anxious to collect Sanskrit texts as they were to find Indian statues, bronzes and paintings, many of which were taken to their own country. The new vision of saṁsāra

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which Mahāyāna idealism created was transfigured and enormously strengthened by the supernatural apparitions of the Bodhisattvas in art that penetrated wherever Buddhism has spread, whether Central Asia, China, Tibet, Further India or Japan. The figures of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas at Mathurā, Sārnāth and Ajantā, of the Buddha in contemplation at Anurādhapura in Ceylon, at Borobodur in Java, at Angkorvat in Cambodia, at the cave-temples of Turfan, Tun-huang or Yun-kang and at Horyuji in Japan, repeat the same archetype. From the cave-monasteries at Ajanta issued forth a rich dynamic artistic tradition that crossing the valley of Kashmir went to Tibet and across the second holy land of Buddhism, Gāndhāra and Uddiyāna, to the Tarim basin and thence to China, Korea and Japan. The same artistic tradition traversing the Pūrva-sāgara from the port of Amaravati went to Java, Siam and Cambodia reaching China again by the sea-route. The pious devotees, who read the works of Aśvaghosha, Āryaśūra, Śāntideva, I-Tsing and Hiuen-Tsang, saw the very same Compassionate Bodhisattva and fairyland of Tushita at Lhassa or Borobodur, Lung-men or Nara. In the history of world thought some of its highest reaches are embodied in the Brāhmaṇic Vedānta and the Mahāyāna Yogācāra transcendental idealism and ethics. The supreme revelation of this lofty metaphysics and ethics in Gupta art is truly one of the grandest achievements of Man.

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PART V
THE CULTURAL EMPIRE OF INDIA

CHAPTER XVII
GREATER INDIA ON THE ASIAN TABLE-LANDS

India's Ancient Intercourse with Babylon, Judaea and Egypt

The geographical isolation of India is a myth sedulously promoted by some British historians. Ever since the dawn of Indian civilization on the banks of the Indus and the Sarasvatī, there had been commercial and cultural contacts with Elam, Mesopotamia and Iran. Strings of towns where the seals and terracotta of the early Indian civilization have been unearthed indicate the most ancient Indo-Mesopotamian trade route by way of the Mūlā Pass and the coastal road running through Las Bela, the Makran and the Hab. Baluchistan was a well-watered and heavily populated region and the antechamber of India in the 3rd millennium B.C. Through Las Bela, the most ancient gateway of India, tin, copper and precious stones flowed into the Indus valley and fabrics, ivories and ornaments went out to Western Asia. The pilgrimage to the shrine of the Mother Goddess Kottari at Hingula or Hinglaj, situated at the extremity of the mountain ranges in Baluchistan on the Hingula river, which had been in existence prior to the invasion of Alexander of Macedon still bears testimony to India's ancient connection with Baluchistan. The Vedic civilization had its traders, called Paṇis, probably a non-Aryan folk, identified by some scholars with the Poeni or Phoenicians and by others with aboriginal traders who used to go in caravans and protect their merchandise against Aryan attacks. Merchants traversed the "four samudras" or seas which "give no support or hold or station" on "vessels with one hundred oars". Indian merchants from the second millennium B.C. must have accompanied Egyptian and Phoenician traders in their voyages to Elam, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Judaea and Egypt. Comparative philology reveals the existence of Sanskrit words such as those for cotton, pepper, ginger, sandal and tamarind, and of Dravidian words such as those for peacock and ape in ancient Hebrew texts. Indigo, tamarind wood and other Indian products have been found in the tombs

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of Egypt. Besides the overland route across Baluchistan, indicated by the distribution of the pottery of the early Indus people in Iran, there was also the sea-route from the mouths of the Indus near Karachi along the Persian and Arabian coasts to Aden and Suez, and thence to Egypt and Levant. Sidon, Tyre, Balkh, Aden, Palmyra, Sumer, Akkad, Mohenjo-daro and Harappa were the great emporia of ancient Indo-Babylonian commerce. The word *mana* (mana hiraṇya) of the Ṛgveda for the earliest Indian weight and measure is itself derived from the Babylonian *Manah*, evidence of the ancient commercial intercourse between Vedic India and Babylon.

"White India" beyond the Indus

The extension in the beginning of the sixth century B.C. of the Persian Empire of Darius (in one of whose inscriptions India for the first time is mentioned as Hidu, derived from the river Sindhu) and later on the invasion of Alexander as well as the establishment of Greek colonies in the Punjab enormously accelerated both trade and cultural intercourse between India and the West. Taxila in India and Kapiśa in Gāndhāra became the most important gateways to India, connected with the ancient caravan routes to Iran, Media and Asia Minor on one side, and China on the other. Central Asia and Gāndhāra had a much higher rainfall and fertility in the past than at present and began to dry up only since the last five centuries. This had been of great advantage for India's external trade and cultural intercourse. The establishment of the Mauryan Empire that included Gāndhāra, the missionary zeal of Aśoka who sent Śramaṇas to Antioch and Alexandria and the rise of Indo-Greek kingdoms in the Punjab, extending their influence to the middle Ganges Valley, led to a further extension of India's trade and cultural relations with the countries of the Hellenistic West. Strabo mentions the ancient trans-Indus route by which goods from India were brought to the river Oxus to be transported thence to Europe by way of the Caspian and Black Seas. The Asian commerce received a great impetus as the result of the incorporation of Gāndhāra in the Maurya Empire. Certain essentially Indian institutions migrated to Khotan even in the Maurya period, as shown by F. W. Thomas, viz., the division of the country into Sima, Śata (hundreds) and Sahasra (thousands) of villages, the appointment of the town-mayor

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(nāgaraka) and "Arya" temples and monasteries. Such was the influence of India upon the trans-Indus regions of Kabul, Kandahār and Seistan in the later Parthian period that these were called "White India". James Darmesteter, the French historian, observes: "Hindu civilization prevailed in those parts, which in fact in the two centuries before and after Christ were known as "White India," and remained more Indian than Iranian till the Musalman conquest". F. W. Thomas also remarks: "The early Uigur Turks of Central Asia developed a Buddhist literature; in Oxiana a Buddhist literature must from about the commencement of the Christian era have existed among Kushāns and Tokharians; and cis-Oxus regions of Bactria, Afghanistan and Seistan have preserved considerable remains of Buddhist shrines, the second of them also written evidences in the shape of inscriptions going back as far atleast as 100 B.C. In regard to the peoples of northern Afghanistan, indeed, it is likely, since to the Greeks, they seemed to resemble Indians, having elephants in their armies, that they had shared from the beginning in part of the development of Vedic civilisation." About 136 B.C. China, threatened by the Hūṇs, sent an embassy to the West seeking the aid of the Scythians, Indians and Iranians against the invaders. As the Hūṇs were defeated the Chinese army moved westward. It was at this time that intimate relations between India and China seemed to have been first established. Probably infiltration of Indian political and cultural ideas had begun earlier in the second or third century B.C. under the Imperial Mauryas. P. C. Bagchi points out that the major contributions of India to China at this time were in the fields of geography and astronomy. The conception of the world divided into nine dvīpas or regions with a central mount, possibly the Kwen Lun range, was Indian; while the Chinese also accepted the twenty seven nakṣatras (asterisks) of Indian astronomy. Ceylon and Further India also came under the ambit of Indian influence due both to the enterprise of traders and the missionary activity of Buddhist kings and nobles.

Ancient Commerce and Monsoon

The Jātakas are full of stories of sea-voyage along the Indian coast from Bhṛgukaccha to Suvarṇabhūmi and to Taprobane (Ceylon) and the great ports mentioned are Tāmralipti in Bengal, Adzeitta in Kaliṅga and Baṅdar (Barbara), Bhṛgukaccha and

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Sūrpāraka in the West. The Milindapañho refers to "a ship-owner who has become wealthy by constantly levying freight in some sea-port towns, and is able to traverse the high seas and go to Baṅga, Takkola (at the mouth of the Takuopa river in Malaya), China, Sovira or Surat or Alexandria or the Coromandel Coast or Further India or any other place where ships do congregate".

It is probably true that the monsoons must have been known to all Eastern navigators of the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal from very early times, although the author of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (c. A.D. 60 to 100) mentions that it was Hippalus who about 45 A.D. discovered "the existence of the monsoon winds blowing regularly across the Indian Ocean". This enabled ships to sail from the Red Sea across the Indian Ocean at the commencement of the monsoon instead of navigating along the Arabian and African coasts. The word 'monsoon' is derived from the Arabic 'mausim'. It is reasonable to assume that long before the Western discovery of the monsoon, Indian, Arab and Chinese sailors utilised it for long, distant voyages in the Eastern waters. The so-called "Hippalus" or the Arabian Sea monsoon was in all probability discovered before Pliny and Strabo and the reception by the Roman Emperor of at least two Indian embassies (about 25 B.C. - 21 B.C.). Otherwise we cannot account for the establishment of something like Yavana Treaty Ports that were mentioned by the author of the Periplus and that were visited by the Roman merchants, traders and middlemen corresponding to the Portuguese, Dutch and English factors of the later centuries. One of these has been recently unearthed by archaeological exploration near Pondicherry. In the Roman trading-station of Arikamedu (literally a mound of ruins) have been discovered by excavations, structures of workshops (probably for the production of muslins and beads), Roman lamps, glass-ware and red-glazed pottery belonging to the first centuries B.C. - A.D. The Tamil "Saṅgam" literature generally dated at the early centuries A.D. also indicates Indian connection with the Mediterranean established before Hippalus. Thus the epic *Silappadikanam* observes with reference to the city of Puhār or Kāverīpaddinaṁ: "The sun shone over the open terraces, over the warehouses near the harbour and over the turrets with windows like the eyes of deer. In different places of Puḫār the onlooker's attention was arrested by the sight of the abodes of Yavanas whose prosperity never waned.

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At the harbour were to be seen sailors from distant lands, but to all appearance they lived as one community". It was the establishment of the Roman Empire, the unsettlement in Syria, Parthia and Bactria and the discovery of Hippalus, which diverted Indo-Roman trade successfully from the northerly route or the long coastal voyage to the direct route from the sea-ports, such as Barygaza (Broach), Muzyris (Mangalore) and Nelcynda on the Malabar coast to Alexandria. Between Alexandria and the Indian coast the journey took less than three months and from the mouth of the Red Sea forty days. On the Coromandel coast the important ports visited by the Alexandrian merchants included Masulipatam, Puhar, Madura and two other towns near present Pondicherry and Calicut. Strabo mentions in 25 B.C. i.e. even earlier than the Western discovery of the Indian monsoon, that "not 20 Egyptian vessels in the year, says a contemporary of Augustus, ventured forth under the Ptolemies from the Arabian gulf; now 120 merchant-men annually sail to India from the port of Myos Hormos alone".

Indo-Roman Trade

A vast prosperous trade developed between India and Rome, India exporting mainly silk, muslin, ivory, pepper, spices, gems and pearls and importing lead, copper, tin, glass, wine and bullion. Singing boys and choice girls for the royal harem were other Indian imports. Roman colonists were settled in several ports in Malabar, and the Coromandel coast such as Muzyris, Madurā and Kāvirīpaddinam. A temple of Augustus was built in the ancient port of Muzyris. 550 million sesterces (about Rs. 80 lakhs) flowed annually, according to Pliny, from Rome to India to pay for the balance of trade. "So dearly do we pay for our luxuries and our women", adds the Roman historian. Between Western India, through its port of Barygaza (Broach) and Persia, through the port of Ommana (Oman on the Persian Gulf) and Apologus (on the mouth of the Euphrates) there was, according to the *Periplus*, a brisk trade. The exports from India to Persia were copper, sandalwood, teak and ebony; while the imports were gold, emeralds, wine, slaves and clothing. Ptolemy mentions Java (Iabadius); and it appears that it was in the time of Marcus Aurelius (180 A.D.) that spices were first shipped to Alexandria from the ports of Malaya and the Indian Archipelago. Kalgam (Kaddaram, Katāha or

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Kedah) is mentioned in *Pattinapplai*, a Tamil poem of the 2nd and 3rd century A.D. as an Eastern port bringing commodities to Kāverīpaddinam, the famous South Indian port on the mouth of the Kāverī. There were Yavana (Egyptian Greek) trading settlements in Kāverīpaddinam; pepper was brought thither in ships, pearls from the Southern and corals from the Eastern seas. It was probably the merchants of Bengal, Kaliṅga and Coromandel Coast that were the first carriers of the highly prized cloves and nutmegs for the Mediterranean world. From the ports of Malabar, Tyndis, Muzyris (Mangalore), Nelcynda and Bacre pepper and ginger used also to be exported to the West, according to the *Periplus*; and there developed a Hindu settlement in the island of Socotra (Dioscorida or Dvīpa Sukhādhara).

India's Supremacy in World Industry and Trade

The Romano-Indian contact in the South, like the Sino-Indian in the Chola period, had economic or commercial rather than cultural import, unlike the similar contact along the over-land routes in Gāndhāra, Samarkhand and Turkestan so important for the evolution of the composite Greco-Buddhist-Gāndhāra art, Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism. The paintings of ships and boats in the frescoes of Ajantā and the stories of the Kathāsaritsāgara, the Ratnāvalī and the Daśakumāra-carita alike testify to the importance of overseas trade and the adventurous spirit of the Indian merchants engaged in trade in distant, uncharted seas for several centuries. From the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* and Ptolemy's *Geography* we learn about India's dominant position in world trade in the early centuries A.D. The balance of trade was persistently and heavily in India's favour, and the civilized countries of the world, including Rome, had to export gold to India. Vast quantities of Roman gold coins have been unearthed from the sites of some of the ancient Southern ports. The major commodities of the Mediterranean trade that could be obtained at the principal ports of India are mentioned in the *Periplus*: pepper in Muzyris (Malabar), bulky pepper, precious stones, pearls and beryls in Barake and Nelcynda (Pāndya country); muslins in Poduca (Pondicherry,) Soptama, (Madras) and Masalia (Masulipatam); ivories at Pukur (Orissa); fine cotton goods from Benares; malabathrum spikenard and, other forest products at Tāmralipti (Bengal). Ships constructed and fitted up by Indians regularly sailed from the Indian ports

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with a varied assortment of goods for trade with both the Mediterranean and South-east Asiatic regions. Indian merchants obtained spices, cloves, nutmegs and corals from Malaya and the Indian Archipelago and silks from China and made huge profits as carriers. "Beautiful large Yavana ships" also used to come to the South Indian ports, as we gather from ancient Tamil poetry. Kāverīpaddinam or Puhār, the great port at the mouth of the Cauvery, with its docks and ware-houses and settlements of Mlecchas, speaking unintelligible tongues rose to unrivalled glory and prosperity in the Chola period. India's development of cloth and silk weaving industries, her knowledge of dyeing and tempering of steel, her practical education in the arts and crafts in the Buddhist universities, the skill and efficiency of her craftsmen and artists and absence of slave labour were responsible for her supremacy in world industry and trade during the first millennium of the Christian era.

The Two Great Silk-Routes in Middle Asia

The establishment of the Kushān empire, extending from Gāndhāra and Sue Vihār to Benares, the development of trade in luxury goods with the Chinese Empire, the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Kanishka's missionary zeal are among the factors that gave the impetus to the Indianisation of the whole of Middle Asia at the beginning of this millennium. On one side, Gāndhāra was greatly influenced by the luxuries and fashions of the Roman world, as evidenced by the discovery of various types of Syrian glass, some painted at Belgram (ancient Kapiśa) and the elaborate coiffures and fashions of the hetaira class of woman in some of the Gāndhāra sculptures. On the other side, Indian ivories, muslins and silks were finding a big market in Greater Rome and China. Since the time of Alexander the Great Indian wares were conducted down the Oxus to the Caspian Sea, whence they were transported by other rivers to the Black Sea. During the periods of the Imperial Romans and the Kushāns the commerce between India and Rome considerably increased with Balkh as the chief emporium in the ante-chamber of India. Balkh was the junction of both land and sea-routes between India, Rome and China. Foucher has shown that Bactria was connected with the Western ports lying to the south of the mouth of the Indus by the usual routes in such a way that by these links the land and river routes passing through Bactria were joined to the sea-route

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terminating in the same ports. According to Hiuen-Tsang, Kanishka seems to have exercised some kind of sway over the territory from Kashgar to the boundary of China, with which country he once came in major conflict. The less advanced people of this region first obtained their religion and literary culture from the Buddhist monks from Gāndhāra and Kashmir, who spread out along the two great "silk-routes" connecting China with India and Western Asia; the northern route through Śākala, Taxila, Kapiśa, Kashgar, Kucha, Karashahr (Agnideśa), Kizil, Turfan (Bharuka), Hami and Ansi, and the southern route through Yarkhand, Khotan, Keriya, Niya, Miran and Lob Nor, both routes finally meeting at Tunhuang on the western frontier of China, where was built the famous group of 182 frescoed caves, popularly known as the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas. Indian civilization flourished along the strings of oases on both the northern and southern silk routes, rich with treasures of manuscripts, images, frescoes and coins unearthed by Stein and other adventurous and indefatigable explorers. At Miran, Dandan Oiliq, Niya and other places in Central Asia, as at Bamiyan and Foudukistan, there are Buddhist frescoes in which the sinuous lines, warm colours and dynamic rhythms of composition of Ajanta mingle harmoniously with Iranian and Chinese features of form and decoration. Khotan, Kashgar, Fergana and Samarkhand were most important centres of trade in the Buddhist oases where the caravans used to stop and rest. Thus Eastern Turkestan became wealthy as the result of the increasing commercial intercourse between India and China and the Mediterranean world. Commerce brought culture—Buddhism and Sanskrit literature and learning. Fa-Hien observes: "From this point (Lob region) travelling westwards the nations that one passes through are all similar in this respect (i.e. in the adoption of Buddhism), and all those who have left the family study Indian books and the Indian spoken language". Numerous documents in wood in Kharoshṭhī characters (about 1st and 2nd century A.D.) have been found at Niya written in a Prākṛt dialect adopted by the official language in south-eastern Turkestan. Stein remarks: "The use in Khotan of both a Prākṛt dialect and of the Kharoṣṭhī script (during the centuries immediately before and after the commencement of the Christian era) becomes at once intelligible if we recognise a substratum of historical fact in the old local tradition heard by Hiuen-Tsang which asserted a partial

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occupation of Khotan by Indian immigrants from the region of ancient Taxila".

Principal Foci of Indianisation of Middle Asia

Khotan, Kashgar and Kucha were the main centres for the propagation of Indian culture that overshadowed Greco-Bactrian, Iranian and Chinese culture currents in this great melting-pot of Middle Asia dotted with monasteries, where crowded together thousands of Buddhist monks, Indian, Chinese, Parthian, Tibetan, Kuchan, Sogdian and others speaking different tongues. After the fall of the Maurya and Syrian empires, the Yavanas of Parthia and Bactria became independent and carved out powerful kingdoms in Gāndhāra, Śākala and Sind. The marked favour shown to Buddhism by the celebrated Indo-Greek king Menander, who reigned (about 150 B.C.) in Śākala, the meeting-place of Yavana, Hindu and Buddhist philosophers and merchants, must have carried the name of the new religion to Bactria and Sogdiana. In Gāndhāra, Buddhist relics and sanctuaries go back as far as at least 100 B.C., as evidenced by Kharoshṭhī inscriptions. Bactria and Śeistan have also preserved remains of ancient Buddhist shrines. In Khotan Buddhism must have been known about 60 B.C., the Chinese receiving some Buddhist books by or from the envoy of the Great Yueh-chi in 2nd century B.C. The Kharoshṭhī script of north-west India got currency in both Khotan and Shan-shan kingdom eastward in the early centuries of the Christian era. In 260 A.D., the Chinese monk Chushe-hing, perhaps the first pilgrim from China to travel in search of the holy texts, came to Khotan and studied Sanskrit and the Buddhist scriptures from the Indian monks of Gomatī-vihāra. Kucha similarly had a Buddhist community by the middle of the 3rd century A.D., when a Kuchan translated the Sukhavatī-vyūha. Scholars are of opinion that Buddhism went to the States north of the great desert in Chinese Turkestan from the countries of Transoxiana, Tokharistan and Parthia, beginning early in the second or perhaps the later half of the first century A.D., when the Parthian power declined and the Kushān power consolidated itself in the Indus valley and the north-west. The impulsion came from the religious zeal of Kanishka and the Mahāyāna patriarchs of his newly converted empire. Kashmir, which was also included in the Kushān empire, largely supplied bands of Buddhist monks who travelled to Eastern Turkestan

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and settled in the cities of Khotan, Kucha, Kao-ch'ang, Karashahr and Kashgar, where they were eagerly sought by local as well as Chinese monks. Within three centuries Buddhism became the dominant religion in Eastern Turkestan. The religious zeal of the new converts and the work of translation of important texts carried on for centuries explain the enormous accumulation of ancient manuscripts, paintings and sculptures in some of the ruined sites and deserted monasteries. The manuscripts were in Chinese, Tibetan, Sanskrit, Central Asian varieties of Brahmi, Sogdian, Uigar and Turkish. The Tarim basin between the third and seventh centuries became the melting-pot of races speaking a variety of tongues—Sanskrit, Chinese, Syriac Sogdian, Turkish, Tokharian and Khotanese. These different peoples were all moulded by the pattern of Indian culture from the South through the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism, whose devotionalism and emphasis of the layman's virtues were entirely congruent with the needs of a fluent cosmopolitan oasis culture springing up on one of the principal high-ways of world commerce. India imported from China raw silk and exported muslins, silk cloths, ivories and other luxury products. Fa-Hien (400 A.D.) gives the following account of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Khotan: "They have all received the faith and find their amusement in religious music. The priests number several tens of thousands, most of them belonging to Mahāyāna. They all obtain their food from a common stock. The people live scattered about; and before the door of every house they build small pagodas, the smallest of which would be about 20 feet in height".

It was in Kucha that Kumārajīva, born of Indian parents, first preached Buddhism to the common people in Eastern Turkestan, having studied Brāhmaṇical philosophy in Kashmir and Kashgar and Mahāyāna Buddhism in Cokkuka (Yarkhand). Kumārajīva induced some Kashmir scholars to go to Kucha where he was in charge of the biggest Buddhist monastery. He soon won celebrity as the most famous Buddhist scholar in Central Asia. In 401 A.D. as a sequel of a Chinese invasion of Kucha he was taken as a prize prisoner to China. The Chinese Emperor accepted him as the royal spiritual preceptor. Kumārajīva learnt Chinese with great alacrity. His profound knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and proficiency in both Sanskrit and Chinese languages made him the most successful among the many translators of Sanskrit Buddhist

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works to Chinese. From 401 to 413 A.D. when he died, he translated 106 Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Chinese including the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, the Sūtrālaṅkāra, the biographies of Nāgārjuna and Aśvaghoṣa and several works of the Mādhyamika School. He was the first to propagate Mahāyāna Buddhism among the Chinese people and may be regarded as the most distinguished among the Indian monks who visited and lived in China through about a thousand years—the Indian counterpart of Hiuen-Tsang. The Kashmir scholar, Buddhayśas, who had settled at Kashgar, and another Indian monk, Puṇyatrāta, helped Kumārajīva's proselytising mission in Chai-nan (modern Si-nan-Phu) the capital of China. Thus Chinese Turkestan, with its Indian colonies and monasteries at Khotan, Kashgar and Kucha, along with many other ancient abandoned sites, such as Miran, Niya, Dandan Oiliq, Rawak and Yotkan where fragments of Sanskrit manuscripts, Buddhist images, votive plaques and paintings have been discovered, was the spring-board from which Indian culture that thrived most in this region in the Gupta age spread eastward to China. It is interesting to note the migration of the Rāma legend across the Himalayas, with the extension of Indian culture. Two legends of Rāma are found in the Chinese Buddhist tales. There are Tibetan and Khotanese versions of the Rama story far different from Valmiki's Rāmāyaṇa. Here Sītā is the daughter of Daśagrīva as in such Indian legends as the Jaina Paumachariya (1st century A.D.) and the late addition to the Rāmāyaṇa, the Adbhuttorakhanda. But while in the Tibetan version there is no trace of Buddhist teaching, the Khotanese story, as restored by H. W. Bailey who suggests the 9th century A.D. as its approximate date, has a Buddhist prologue and epilogue, and is adapted to Buddhist notions.

The Succession of Indian Monk-missionaries through a Millennium.

For centuries the northern "silk-routes" were traversed by large numbers of both merchants and scholar-pilgrims from India to China, and from China to India. On the whole, however, the majority of the monk-missionaries from the Indian mainland carried Buddhism to China by the southern sea-route through Java or Sumatra and the land-route from Kāmarūpā across Upper Burma and Tonking; the northern routes being used by monks from the

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Indian Buddhist borderlands, such as Parthia, Samarkhand and Turkestan and from Gāndhāra, Kashmir and Uddiyāna. The rise of the military state of the Ghaznavids (977-1186 A.D.) extending from the Oxus to the Indus and ruling at Ghazni and Lahore, blocked the northern routes from India.

Of the Indian monk-pilgrims the most outstanding figures were Kaśyapa Mātaṅga and Dharmaratna who were the first to carry Buddhism eastward through Tokharistan and set foot on the soil of China (about A.D. 65) where they translated five short suttas; Dharmarakṣa (284 A.D.) who remained for 30 years in China, translating about 200 Sanskrit texts into Chinese; Buddhabhadra who arrived in China in 398 A.D.; Kumārajīva, perhaps the most famous among the Indian scholars who was entrusted by the Chinese Emperor, who became his disciple, with the work of translation of Sanskrit texts (about 401 to 413 A.D.); Saṁgha-varmi who went from Ceylon to China in 420 A.D. and was the translator of the Mahisasaka Vinaya; Guṇavarman, whose fame as a missionary in Ceylon and Java induced the Chinese Emperor to invite him to Nanking where the Jetavana-vihāra was constructed for his preaching (431 A.D.); Guṇabhadra who was the translator of the Saṁyukta-āgama went to China from Ceylon in 435 A.D.; Saṁghabhadra came to China and translated the Samantapāsādikā in 488 A.D.; Bodhidharma who "came floating on the sea to Pan-yu" (Canton) in 526 A.D. and travelled over a great part of China during the reign of the devout Emperor Wu, disseminating the Buddhist doctrine of meditation (ch'an) and paving the way for the rapproachment of the Northern and Southern schools; Paramārtha, a native of Ujjaini, who went to Nanking in 548 A.D. and translated about 500 works including Aśvaghoṣa's Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda, Life of Vasubandhu and Tarka-śāstra; Jinagupta, who became the spiritual preceptor of an Emperor of Tang dynasty and translated into Chinese 37 original Sanskrit works (second half of the 6th century A.D.); Bodhiruci who went on invitation from the court of a Chālukya king to China (693 A.D.) where the Emperor set up a board of Indian and Chinese scholars for the translation of Mahāyāna works and himself took down notes of the translations; and Kumāraghoṣa, a scholar monk from Bengal, who became the spiritual guide of the Śailendra Emperors of Java (8th century). Other important teachers who went to China with the torch of Buddhist religion and culture were Buddhajīva (423 A.D.)

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who proceeded from Kashmir; Dharma-kṣema (414-433 A.D.) and Guṇabhadra (435-468 A.D.) from middle India; Jñanabhadra and Yaśo-gupta (6th century) from Bengal and Assam; Buddhabhadra from Jalalabad and Dharmagupta (500 A.D.) from Kānyakubja; and Gautama Dharmajñāna who was appointed Governor of a District in China (577 A.D.).

It is quite clear that every part of India shared in the arduous, marvellous march of the religion, art and philosophy of India. Even batches of Buddhist nuns (Bhikshunis) went from Ceylon to China in 433-434 A.D. on a ship called Nandi. They established in China the Bhikshuni order. As the Chronicler of Ceylon observes in relating one of the triumphs of Buddhist missionary enterprise: "Moved by the desire to convert the world when the world's welfare is concerned, who would be slothful and indifferent?"

The Chinese Monk-pilgrims in India

Of the Chinese scholar pilgrims the most famous are Fa-hien, (399-414 A.D.) disciple of Kumārajīva, Sung-Yun (518 A.D.), Hiuen-Tsang (600-654 A.D.) and I-Tsing (635-713 A.D.). Hiuen-Tsang, the most esteemed disciple of Śīlabhadra of the University of Nālandā, had the unique privilege in India of being formally honoured by Emperor Harsha at the regal gift distribution to holy men in Prayāga and by the University of Nālandā by being made the occupant of the first chair among the teachers. His journey contributed greatly to advance the cause of Indian Buddhist culture in China for he brought to China from India more than 650 texts, a part of which he and his pupils translated into Chinese, producing more than 1,000 volumes of the sacred word. I-Tsing collected some 400 different texts of Buddhist works and on his return home translated 56 works in 230 volumes, laying the foundations of the Mūla-sarvastivādin school in China. He mentions the names of three Chinese scholars sojourning in India in his time: Hiuen Chao at Nālandā, Mahāyānapradīpa at Tāmralipti, and Wuhing at Tiladha, and also refers to "the Mongolians of the North" sending students to India for instruction. Recently the Chinese scholar, Liang Chi-Chao, has shown that there were in all as many as 187 Chinese scholar pilgrims who visited or attempted to visit India at different times between the 3rd and 8th centuries. Of these 37 died in their

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journey to or back from India, and 6 died in India. The burning sun in the vast, quick-sand Tarim desert, the difficult journey across the snow-capped Pamirs, the Karakoram mountains and Kashmir or the dangers from typhoon and piracy in the Eastern seas could only be overcome by the Chinese pilgrims' religious enthusiasm and love for the holy land of the Ganges. The risks and perils of such a journey and the attractions of the holy land were vividly described by Hiuen-Tsang in his memorial to the Chinese Emperor. "In the 4th month of the third year of the period Chengkuan (630 A.D.) braving dangers and obstacles, I, Hiuen-Tsang, secretly found my way to India. I traversed over vast plains of shifting sand scaled precipitous mountain-crags clad with snow, found my way through the scarped passes of the iron gates, passed along by the tumultuous waves of the hot sea. . . . . Thus I have accomplished a journey of more than 50,000 li; yet, not withstanding the thousand differences of customs and manners I have witnessed, the myriads of dangers I have encountered, by the goodness of Heaven I have returned without accident and now offer my homage with a body unimpaired, and a mind satisfied with the accomplishment of my vows. I have beheld the Gṛdhrakūṭa mountain, worshipped at the Bodhi tree; I have seen traces not seen before, heard sacred words not heard before, witnessed spiritual prodigies exceeding all the wonders of nature." The steady influx of the scholars and pilgrims to India continued for several centuries. In fact it considerably increased in the heyday of the Sung Empire from the 10th to the 13th centuries. Not less praise-worthy were the fortitude and courage of the Indian scholar-missionaries, who in their outward journeys similarly braved the dangers of mountains, deserts and seas, settled in foreign lands and devoted their lives to spread culture and religion among unfamiliar or semi-barbarous people. I-Tsing briefly enumerates the names of the great masters to whom the Celestial empire owes its Buddhism: "Kāśyapa Mātaṅga and Dharmaraksha preached good tidings in the eastern capital Lo (Honan-fu); the fame of Paramārtha reached even to the Southern Ocean (i.e. Nanking) and the venerable Kumārajīva supplied a virtuous pattern to the foreign land (China). Afterwards the Bhadanta Hiuen-Tsang followed out his professional career in his own country. This way, both in the past and present, have teachers spread far and wide the light of Buddhism (or 'the Sun of the Buddha')." The phenomenal success of the colossal Indian

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missionary adventure is amply adduced by the fact that by about the end of the 3rd century A.D. 186 monasteries had been erected and there were 3,700 monks in China. It is recorded that there were as many as 3,000 Indians in China at the beginning of the 6th century A.D. By about the end of the 4th century, 17,068 temples were built and 263 volumes were translated by 27 scholars. The progress was much faster in the subsequent centuries, Hiuen-Tsang himself carrying out the stupendous task on his return to China of translating 740 works in 1,335 books. As the result of the translation of the vast Buddhist lore undertaken by Buddhist scholars from India for about a whole millennium, one-third of Chinese classical literature is translation from Sanskrit and Prākṛt literatures by Indians. Only a very small part of the original literature is preserved in India. Sanskrit-Chinese dictionaries and grammars were produced that proved invaluable for both Indian and Chinese scholars who collaborated in the literary undertakings. F. W. Thomas marks the following stages in the introduction of Buddhist monks into China: "The first texts introduced into China were simple works of ethical or religious tendency, like the Sūtra in 42 sections, Karma vibhaṅga, Avadānas and the Sukhāvatī-vyūha: somewhat later came various Dhāraṇīs. Kumārajīva appears to have been the first to translate Mahāyāna works, the difficult dialectical treatises of Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Vasubandhu and others: Diṅnāga came in due course later. The Āgamas and Vinaya—and it is, of course, known that the Chinese Tripitaka contains the Āgamas and Vinaya of several sects, including the Pāli—were almost contemporary with the Mahāyāna of which at a later date Hiuen-Tsang was a very emphatic champion". In China these preferences developed into sects, the Pure Land sect, the Lotus sect, the Dhyāna or Chan sect and so forth, and created a literature of original Chinese commentaries, some of them of great value. Kumārajīva had two distinguished pupils at Chiang-an (modern Sian in Shensi), viz., Seng-chao and Tao-sheng. The former (384-414 A.D.) was previously a pupil of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu and later on assimilated the Mādhyamika doctrines to Chinese thought. Three of his essays are titled "There is no Real Unreality", "On Prajña not being knowledge", "On the Immutability of Things". Tao-sheng (died in 434 A.D.) was a brilliant thinker and eloquent speaker, about whom it is said that when he discoursed the stones nodded in assent. Among the doctrines which received special emphasis

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at his hands were the universality of Buddha-nature, the doctrine of Sudden Enlightenment and that a good deed entails no retribution. His famous observations are: "The Enlightenment of Mahāyāna Buddhism is not to be sought outside the Wheel of Birth and Death. Within it one is enlightened by the affairs of birth and death. As to reaching the other shore, if one reaches it, one is not reaching the other shore. Both not-reaching and not-not-reaching are really reaching. This shore here means birth and death, the other shore means Nirvāṇa". This is reminiscent of the famous Mahāyāna aphorism that which is Nirvāṇa is Saṁsāra; that which is suffering is Enlightenment. On the basis of Pari-Nirvāṇa-Sūtra Tao-Sheng developed the doctrine that even the Icchāntika, i.e., the person who opposes Buddhism, is capable of achieving the Buddha. Both Seng-chao and Tao-sheng prepared a theoretical background for the development of Dhyāna or Ch'an-Buddhism, who came to China between 520 and 526 A.D. The Ch'anism split up into two sects led by Shen-hsiu and Hui-neng. The former rests on the universal Buddha-nature, what the Chinese call the Hsing tsung or Universal Mind, the latter on the Mādhyamika doctrine of Void. The view that "the very mind is Buddha" is presented in the following poem of Shen-hsiu:

The body is like unto the Bodhi-tree,
And the mind to a mirror bright;
Carefully we cleanse them hour by hour
Lest dust should fall upon them.

The other doctrine, viz., that the reality is "not-mind and not-Buddha"; finds expression in Hui-neng's poem:

Originally there was no Bodhi-tree,
Nor was there any mirror;
Since originally there was nothing,
Whereon can the dust fall.

The modern Chinese philosopher Fung Yu-Lan finely shows how the Mādhyamika school of Buddhism, which bears remarkable similarity to philosophical Taoism in China, developed in conjunction with the Chinese philosophical tradition. The interaction between the Buddhist negative method of metaphysics and Taoism led to the rise of the Dhyāna or Ch'an school, which, though Buddhist, is at the same time Chinese. The doctrine of the Ch'an school

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paved the way for Neo-Confucianism. Thus the introduction of Buddhism with the revival of Taoism was absorbed into the broad logical development of the Chinese philosophy. Besides Buddhism, particularly Ch'anism, profoundly influenced Chinese literature and art. It is noteworthy that the Indian influences on Chinese Buddhist art emanated from both the north and the south—from the sculpture of Mathurā and Ajarvta which left its impress on the Buddhist figure representation in Jun-huang, Yun-kang, Lung-men and Tien-Lung Shan and from the art of Amarāvati which similarly bore its stamp in the Buddha reliefs in the Nan-Hsian Tang cave temples of Honan.

Buddhism in Korea, Japan and Mongolia

From China Buddhism spread to Korea in 372 A.D., and thence it first made its entry into Japan in 538 A.D. In 604 A.D. Buddhism was accepted by the Prince Regent Shotoku as the national religion of Nippon. By the 7th century almost the whole of Central and East Asia came under the spell of Buddhism. New waves of Buddhist art, of Gupta, Pāla and Pallava inspiration, spread to Middle and South-east Asia. The mysterious apparitions of the graceful and profoundly compassionate Bodhisattvas of the Mahāyāna heaven, with hands displaying Indian mudrās and holding Indian lotuses created by the art of Ajantā, Bāgh and Amarāvatī and the rhapsodies of the Mahāyāna texts now were familiar throughout the length and breadth of a whole continent arousing faith and devotion among the common people.

India's contact with Mongolia began in the eighth century A.D. when an Indian monk, Prājña, took part in the translation of Buddhist texts into the Mongol language. In the extensive Mongal Empire, established by Jengiz Khan, Buddhism, Islam and Nestorian Christianity thrived side by side. The grandson of Jengiz Khan, Kuyuk, became a disciple of the Buddhist monk-scholar, Śāskya Pandit, hailing from the Śākya monastery of Tibet. Two of his nephews later on took up Buddhist missionary work in Mongolia. Of these Phags-pa later on attended a Parliament of Religions at Karakorum where he defeated in debate the Taoist monks. Kublai Khan thereupon accepted Tibetan Buddhism as the state religion of the Mongol Empire. Phags-pa was appointed by the Khan as the head of the Buddhist Church and also his Viceroy in Tibet.

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The Indianisation of Tibet and Nepal

It is a paradox that the Indianisation of Tibet was the direct result of Tibetan invasion and conquest of a considerable territory of Northern India in the middle of the 7th century A.D. The episode of the Tibetan occupation of a part of India for half a century as the result of an invasion across the north-eastern gateway and reduction of Assam, Bengal and Bihar to submission is wellnigh disregarded by Indian historians. The Tibetan Emperor Srong-tsan-Gampo, (600-650 A.D.) who overran Northern India along with Upper Burma and Chinese Turkestan, was the first to introduce the Indian alphabet and writing from Kashmir, while his two wives, one from Nepal and the other from China, built the first Buddhist temples in Tibet. Tibet formerly was not so isolated from India as she is to-day; for the caravan routes from India, China and Turkestan passed through the great inland marts of Tibet—Lhasa, Shigatse and Gyantse. From the time of Strong-tsan Gampo Buddhism, adopted by the kings, began to spread in that country, contending with the native magic and shamanism. Thonmi, Gampo's minister learnt the Buddhist doctrine and the Indian alphabet in India and wrote the first Tibetan grammar. The translation of Indian texts into Tibetan then began with great avidity, under the direction of Thinmi. In the middle of the 8th century, a learned monk, Padmasaṁbhava, who was born in the famous centre of Buddhist Tāntrikism, Uddiyana (identified with Vajrayoginī in Dacca district), and who studied at the University of Nālandā, came to Tibet (747 A.D.) and preached a different type of Vajrayāna Buddhism, comprising the cult of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and their associated Śaktis, that assimilated native magic and ritual, and became the popular religion. Its major features were the worship of Amitābha and belief in his heaven, the acquisition by man of supernatural powers through spells, mantras and yaṅtrams and the representation of the Compassionate Ones, coming to succour man in forms of violent fiends for striking terror into the heart of all evil powers. Thus originated Lamaism in Tibet from the curious admixture of religions of Bengal in the 8th century, of which Padmasaṁbhava was the real founder. Padmasaṁbhava stayed for thirteen years in Tibet and imported a large number of Sanskrit texts, predominantly Tāntrika, that were translated under his

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direction. Lamaism was thus founded essentially on the basis of Indian cult, yoga and spell that Padmasaṁbhava derived largely from Eastern Bengal and Assam. The civil and religious law was also codified under the authority of Padmasaṁbhava. This period was associated, according to Chinese traditions, with the conquest of Eastern India up to the Bay of Bengal, called the Tibetan Sea by the Tibetan Emperor, Ti-song De-tsen. The famous monasteries of Odantapuri and Nālandā were then the foci of the religious and artistic influences of India upon Tibet. Lamaism subsequently spread to Mongolia in the 13th and 14th centuries in large measure replacing the Mahāyāna. Padmasaṁbhava (called Lo-Pon-Rim-po-Che, or the Precious Teacher) himself was deified, and is still worshipped in the major Tibetan monasteries where his image is painted on the walls, and installed on the altar by the side of the Buddha.

There had been a constant see-saw struggle between magical practice and elevated worship and contemplation in Tibet. Several Indian monk-scholars took notable part in purging Lamaism, "the Religion" or "Buddha's Religion", from magical and Tāntrika elements. The famous Śāntarakshita, a native of Bengal, born in the royal family of Zahor (identified with Sabhar in the district of Dacca) in the reign of Gopāla, came to Tibet from Nālandā where he was the High Priest in the eighth century, and was instrumental in establishing the first regular Buddhist monastery of Bsam-ye after the model of the Odantapurī monastery. Here were assembled according to the evidence of Atisa, more Indian books, than in the great monasteries of Buddha-gayā, Vikramaśilā and Odantapurī put together. He wrote philosophical works which exist in both Sanskrit and Tibetan and was aided in laying the foundations of pure Buddhism in Tibet by his disciple Kamalaśilā. To Śāntrakshita is attributed the Tibetan aphorism of elevated meditation: "The essence of Reality is movement".

The even more celebrated Atisa or Dīpaṁkara Śrijñāna, the most famous Buddhist scholar in Magadha of his time and High Priest of Vikramaśilā monastery in the reign of Nayapāla, came to Tibet in the middle of the 11th century and also contributed materially towards shifting the emphasis from magic, miracle and mantra to pure meditation according to the Mahāyāna creed. During the thirteen years he lived in Tibet, he wrote about 200 books, both Mahāyānist and Vajrayānist, until his death in Tibet in 1053 A.D.

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The most famous of these is the Bodhi-patha pradīpa. The pre-eminence of Dīpaṁkara Srijñāna in the field of Indian thought will be abundantly evident from the following remark of Sthavira Ratnākara, the chief of Vikramaśilā monastery when Atisa was leaving for Tibet for his mission: "Without Atisa India will be in darkness. He holds the key to many institutions. In his absence many monasteries will be empty. The looming signs prognosticate evil for India. Numerous Turushkas (Muhammadans) are invading India, and I am much concerned at heart. May you proceed to your country with your companions and with Atisa work for the good of all loving beings there!" Atisa introduced into Tibet new phases of the Mahayānā doctrine, viz., the Kālacakrayāna (the wheel of Eternity) and the Vajrayāna with their stress of the Ādi-Buddha, whence all the major Buddhas and Bodhisattvas together with their Śaktis were derived. Tibetan Buddhism then entered a Byzantine phase of worship of the male and female principles by means of elaborate yogic exercises, rituals, sacrifices, dhārṇīs and maṇḍalas. Every reform movement in Tibet was also associated with the translation by Indian and Tibetan monks of large numbers of Sanskrit Buddhist texts. Atisa (Tson-ka-pa Pandit of the Tibetans) travelled from Province to Province in Tibet, tirelessly writing and preaching, and succeeded in rehabilitating Buddhism on an elevated plane and monastic discipline on a pure and rigid basis. The Indian tradition of learning and scholarship was maintained through the subsequent migration of famous scholars from the Indian Buddhist monasteries, the last of whom was the distinguished Śīlabhadra, born of a royal family in Samataṭa in Bengal and head of the Nālandā monastery, who with his companions came to the Śākya monastery after the Muslim destruction of Nālandā in 1204. One of his works, Ārya-Buddha-bhūmi-vyākhyāna, has a Tibetan translation. Another great scholar of Bengal, also highly esteemed in Tibet, was Abhayakāra-gupta, the High Priest of the Vikramśilā monastery, who translated many books into the Tibetan language. It is not definitely known whether he actually went to Tibet. Tibet was also influenced by another religious movement of Magadha and Bengal, viz., that of the Siddhas and Nāthas associated with the last phase of Buddhist Tāntrikism. One of these Siddhācāryas is Mar-pa, a senior contemporary or disciple of Atisa. He was the spiritual preceptor of Mila-rapa. A sweet and interesting figure is this great Tibetan

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poet-mystic, Mila-rapa (1038-1122), who had his training in mystical contemplation from Marpa. Mila-rapa's ardent, mystical "Hundred thousand songs", dwelling on the profound silence and elusive mystery of the mountains and the bliss of yogic meditation are still sung throughout Tibet. This mystical doctrine is known as the Short Path (Lam Chung), corresponding to the Indian Sahaja in which the aim is quick liberation: "The doctrine which I teach is such that he who meditates on it during the night attains liberation during the following day". The sect of Marpa and Mila has established many monasteries, and commands the allegiance of a considerable number of Tibetans. Tibetan art has been largely influenced by the art traditions of Ajantā that travelled from the Tarim basin and Kashmir to Tibet and of Pāla and Sena sculpture and painting between the 8th and 10th centuries that travelled through Nepal. Frescoes of goddesses, found in Man-nan monastery in Western Tibet, bear the characteristic impress of the Ajantā style. The innumerable temple banners (taṅkas) of Tibet, often depicting the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other saints and the Tāntrika deities represent the most distinctive form of Tibetan art, their motifs and designs exhibiting a fine blend of Western and Eastern Indian influences. The iconometry is characteristically Indian, derived from the Sanskrit texts of the Śilpa-śāstra and the Citra-lakṣaṇa. The Tibetan artists ardently copied the poses, mudrās and even the jewellery of the Indian models, brought along with Buddhist and Tāntrika doctrines and rituals by strings of Tibetan scholars and pilgrims from the holy land of the Ganges. For many centuries translation and copying work had gone on in the monasteries of Tibet and two canons, viz., Bkah-hgyur and Bstan-hgyur, now exist in several editions and also translations in several of the languages of Central Asia. These compilations not merely include Buddhist literature but also versions of the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata stories, kāvyas like the Buddha-carita and the Meghadūta, the Cāṇakya-nīti and various works on grammar, alaṅkāra, medicine and painting. The Tibetan Grammar was based on the model of Paṇini. In fact, the entire Tibetan literature was a translation of Indian literature, the greater part of which is now lost in India. Sanskrit literature and thought thus traversed over a considerable portion of Asia through Lamaism during Mongol times, while many Sanskrit texts are preserved and can be restored

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from the Tibetan. F. W. Thomas refers to two works in the original Sanskrit presented by Bstan-hgyur, viz., an Īśvara-Nirākaraṇa by Nāgārjuna and Sarasvatī-stotra attributed to Kālidāsa.

Nepal, extending throughout the north from Kashmir on the West and Assam on the East, included in its territory the birthplace of the Buddha—ancient Lumbini. According to tradition, Aśoka introduced Buddhism into Nepal and founded the capital city of Patana, where there are stūpas that distinctly indicate the Mauryan style. The Mahāyāna Buddhism is said to have been preached in Nepal by Vasubandhu. From the 8th century the religion and culture of Nepal bore the impress of all currents of the Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna, Sahaja and Tāntrikism that spread to all quarters from the Universities of Nālandā, Vikramaśilā and Oddaṇdapura and there had been a constant migration of monks, scholars and artists between Bihar and Bengal on the one-hand and Nepal on the other. Thus Nepal responded sensitively to the broad trends of ideas and movements in Northern India, Dīpaṁkara on his way to Tibet stayed for a while in Nepal, where he presented an elephant to the King of Nepal who in gratitude built the monastery, called Than-vihāra. The Prince of Nepal became a Buddhist monk and accompanied his Master, Dīpaṁkara to Tibet. The eighty four great Siddhas or Nāthas had their devotees in Nepal, while Pāla and Sena art traditions governed the techniques and motifs of Nepalese paintings and sculptures. Nepal has adopted the Indian Saṁvat and Śaka eras, the rules and regulations of the Indian caste system and Brāhmaṇical sacerdotalism. India has some of her holiest places of pilgrimage in Nepal: Paśupatināth for the Hindus and Lumbinī-vana, Bodhanātha and Ārya Svayaṁbhū for the Buddhists.

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CHAPTER XVIII

DVĪPĀNTARA BHĀRATA OR THE INDIA OF THE PACIFIC

The Nine Island Kingdoms (nava-bheda) of Bharatavarsha

The age of the Guptas witnessed India's cultural expansion not merely in the heart of Asia with Indian colonies and kingdoms distributed from the frontiers of Gāndhāra and Kashmir northward to the oases of Central Asia and north-eastward to the Chinese frontier, but also beyond the seas in South-east Asia. The trans-Himalayan outposts included Śailadeśa (Kashgar), Chokhuka (Yarkhand), Kustana, Gaushana or Godana (Khotan), Chadota (Niya), Chalmada (Shan-Shan), Bharuka (Uch-Turfan), Kuchi (Kuchar), Agnideśa (Karasahr) and Turapanni (Turfan). The Sanskrit name of the river Tarim was Sītā. As in the North, so in the East the colonies and kingdoms had Sanskrit names: Ceylon (Laṅkā, Siṁhaḷa, Tāmraparṇī or Āmradvīpa), Nāgadvīpa, Ratnadvīpa (divisions of Ceylon), Ahudvīpa (isle of Kara), Burma (Suvarṇabhūmi, Maramma, Śrī-kṣetra), Ramaṇṇadeśa, the Malay Peninsula (Malayadvīpa, Śālmalīdvīpa), Kāka-dvīpa (Kokkonagara), Ganganagara (Perak) Kedah (Kataha dvīpa), Kama-lanka or Karma-ranga (Ligor), Siam (Syāma, Dvārāvatī), Sukhodaya (Sukhothat), Cambodia and Annam (Kambuja and Champā), Sumatra (Suvarṇadvīpa or Srī-vijaya), Java (Yavadvīpa), Madura (Madhurā), Borneo (Varuṇadvīpa), Bali (Balidvīpa) and Panyupāyana (the Philippines). Mention is also made of Karpūradvīpa identified with north-western Sumatra celebrated for camphor (Malay, Kapur barus). The link between Greater India beyond the mountains and Greater India beyond the seas is represented by Gāndhāra, which till the beginning of the Moslem conquest was regarded as an integral part of Bhāratavarsha and from one of whose towns, Kamboja, the eastern colony of Cambodia was possibly named. In the Vāmana Purāṇa, the names of the nine divisions (nava-bheda, territories across the seas (samudrāntarita) included in Bhāratavarsha and designated as Dvīpāntara or Island-India, are given as follows:—Indra-dvīpa

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(Burma), Kaserumat, Tāmraparṇa (Tāmraparṇī) Gabhastimat, Nāga-dvīpa (Nicobar), Katāha (Kedah), Siṁhala (Ceylon), Varuṇa (Borneo) and Kumāra. It has not been possible for the historians to identify all the islands. (Dvīpa, according to Pāṇini, means land surrounded by water on two sides, and hence includes a peninsula like Malaya). The Vāyu Purāṇa mentions that the name of a Dvīpa is derived from tree or vegetation predominant therein. Śaṅkha-dvīpa and Varāha-dvīpa noted in the Vāyu Purāṇa, are Sankhay and Barawa islands referred to by the Arabs. Aṅga-dvīpa, mentioned in the Vāyu and Brahmāṇda Purāṇas may be identified with Kambuja deśa. I-Tsing who visited India from China 673 A.D., after a so-journ of 6 months in Sumatra, for the study of Sanskrit grammar, mentioned more than ten-colonies in this region, where Indian customs and religious practices along with Sanskrit learning were prevalent, including Śrī Bhoga (Śrī Vijaya) in Sumatra, Kalinga (Pūrva Kalinga) in Java, Mahasin and Pembua in Borneo and the islands of Kun-lun, Bāli and Bhojapara. In Kālidāsa's Raghuvaṁśam (VI, 57) we have a reference to Dvīpāntara associated with the clove flower, native to the eastern islands. "The breeze scented with lavaṅga blossom and wafted across the seas assuages the fatigue of the amorous king of Kalinga", the kingdom which played a dominant role in the early colonisation of Dvīpāntara. Pūrva Kalinga is the name of Java or a part of Java according to the Chinese history and thus the poet's mention of Dvīpāntara in connection with the king of Kalinga is extremely apposite. The poet also refers to the king of Anūpa Deśa (the Narbadā valley with its capital, Māhiṣmatī) establishing his sacrificial posts in "eighteen islands" as tokens of his sovereignty (VI, 38).

The Indianisation of Simhala (Ceylon)

Tāmraparṇa or the island of Ceylon was the first of the Dvīpāntara Bhārata to come under the ambit of Indian culture. Both Siṃhala and Tāmraparṇa are probably derived from cinnamon (tamālapatra), the natural product of Ceylon from which the Indian and Greek traders called the island, Simhaladvīpa or Tambapannidvīpa. The ancient Ceylonese chronicles, the Dvipavaṁśa and the Mahāvaṁśa, mention the earliest Indian contact as due to the landing of Prince Vijaya Siṁha of Bengal, who after a short struggle with the natives became king and named the

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island Siṁhala or Sīhala. This episode which took place in the 5th century B.C. is represented in one of the frescoes of Ajanta. One of the earliest inscriptions, the Ritigala inscription, written in Brahmi character is as old as about the 3rd century B.C. Here we have the names of Devānampiya Mahārāja Gamāni Tissa (Saddha Tissa) and his son Abhaya (Lañja Tissa). The Mahābhārata mentions that the Siṁhalas attended the celebrated Rājasūya sacrifice performed by the Pāṇḍavas at Indraprastha. The ancient inhabitants of the island were the Nāgas (whence the names Nagadvīpa), Yakkhas (whose women are mentioned in the Valahassa Jātaka as shipwrecking mariners and devouring them) and Rākshasas (mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa and much later by Hiuen Tsang). Several of the Buddhist Jātakas as well as the Milinda paṅha mention sea-voyages to Tāmraparṇī or Ceylon. According to the Ceylonese chronicles, the first introduction of Buddhism into the island was due to the mission sent by Aśoka and headed by his son Mahendra. Later on Aśoka's daughter, the nun Saṅghamitrā, carried to the island from Bodh-Gayā a branch of the famous Bodhi-tree that was planted in the Mahāvihāra established in their honour and is still recognised as the Jaya-mahā bodhi. The conversion of the king, Devānampiya Tissa, and the activities of Mahendra, Sumana and Saṅghamitrā led to the whole island going Buddhist. The Siṁhalese kings built magnificent monasteries and stūpas bigger than any in India; and Ceylon still treasures some of the most sacred relics of the Buddha and his early disciples. One of the greatest and most pious king-builders of Ceylon was Dutthagamani or Dutugemunu who rescued the island from the subjection of the Chola conqueror, Elara, accomplished the task of political unification and constructed the famous Ruanwali Dagoba that enshrined the Buddhist relics. Mahāyāna Buddhism came to Ceylon in the early centuries of the Christian era as indicated by the Nāgārjunikonda inscriptions. During the reign of king Mahānāman (412-34, the famous Buddhist monk, Buddhaghoṣa went from Bodh-Gayā to Ceylon, where he wrote some famous commentaries on the Pālī Buddhist canon that are recognised as authoritative throughout the East. Buddhaghoṣa visited Burma in 450 A.D. bringing with him a copy of the Pāli Tripiṭaka as the gift of Ceylon to this country. The famous Allahabad Praśasti of Samudragupta mentions that the Ceylonese and several other insular peoples referring to the inhabitants of the eastern islands

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(Dvīpāntara) propitiated him by the offer of homage and tribute or presents. Thus Ceylon along with the Indian archipelago came under the influence of the Gupta Empire. In the latter half of the sixth century A.D. Ceylon was conquered by the Pallava king, Siṁha-viṣṇu, and again by his grandson Nara-Siṁha-Varman. After the decline of the Pallava Empire which included Ceylon, the island came under the suzerainty of the Cholas under Rājendra Chola I, along with the Nicobar islands and parts of Malaya and the Indian archipelago. The Śailendra Empire of Java had an arduous and protracted trial of strength with the Chola power, and one of the causes of its decline was the failure of an expedition against the island of Ceylon in the 13th century. Ceylon has remained Buddhist for about 22 centuries; her rice agriculture and irrigation, arts and crafts, drama and music still bear the impress of Indian culture and way of living. The Statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattva at Anurādhapura and other ancient capitals and the frescoes at Sigiriya show the typical Indian style at its best, vying with the creations at Mathurā, Sārnāth and Ajantā in their formal values, poise and serenity. The Hindu temples of Pollannaruva (Pulastipura) bear the impress of the Chola style, while many bronze images of Hindu deities that have been found show South Indian influences.

Incentives of Colonisation

The causes of the acceleration of Indianisation that embraced most of the kingdoms of the peninsula of Indo-China, except those inhabited by the Annamites and all the kingdoms of western Indonesia are manifold. The major causes according to George Coedes, are economic viz., the demand for luxuries—spices, scented woods, perfumes, camphor etc.—consequent on Alexander's conquest of north-west India and the contact with the western Mediterranean world; the demand for new sources of gold following the closing of the caravan route across Bactria by which India had supplied itself with gold from Siberia; the development of the construction of large Indian and Chinese junks using a technique borrowed from the Persian Gulf and the discovery of the periodic alternation of the monsoons. The Jātakas, the Bṛhat-kathā and the Milindapanha alike testify that in the two centuries immediately preceding and following the birth of Christ overseas trade and exploration captured the imagination of the Indian people. Stories

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and legends of the period describe romantic adventures of "gold-seekers" in far-off lands across the seas, difficult "goat, mouse, bamboo and creeper paths" in thick jungles and also the perils of the voyage together with the fabulous riches brought from distant shores. All this amply demonstrates that commerce stimulated the colonisation of Dvīpāntara Bhārata. The voyage from India to Fou-Nan (Cambodia) and back in the 3rd century A.D. took three or four years according to a Chinese source. Fa-Hien (504 A.D.) took only a fortnight for the voyage from Tāmralipti to Siṁhala in fine weather in winter, and about three months from Siṁhala to Java in tempestuous weather, breaking journey at an island for the repair of leakage in his ship. In the seventh century I-tsing took only two months for the journey from Śrī-Vijaya to Nāgapatam. As the voyage in the eastern waters became less hazardous and took shorter time the Indian merchants flocked to the markets of Malay and the Indian Archipelago in larger numbers. Gold is abundant in Śrī-Vijaya notes I-tsing, who also mentions the following important agricultural products as merchandise: betel-nuts (pin-lang Sanskrit, pūga), nut-megs, cloves (lavaṅga) and Baros-camphor. The wealth, luxury and flourishing condition of arts, crafts and trade of the Gupta Empire to which Fa-Hien bears ample testimony promoted both western and eastern commerce. In fact the extension of the Gupta Empire to Gurjara and the eastern sea-board from Kalinga to Kānchī with their famous sea-ports and markets gave great filip to both the lucrative Indo-Chinese trade in gold, silver, spices and areca nuts and colonisation and settlement in Dvīpāntara Bhārata. To these economic causes must be added a political factor—the political unrest and confusion in Western India and Gujarat due to the discomfiture of the Śakas and the White Hūṇs as the result of the conquests of the Gupta Emperors and of Yaśodharman, the advance of the Sassanians and Turks from the north and the later conquests of Prabhākaravardhana and Harsha. Thus swarms of foreign and Indian refugees must have sought the ports of Gujarat and Western India for emigration beyond the seas from the 4th to the middle of the eighth century. The Javanese chronicles have preserved the tradition that Java was first colonised by a Prince from Gujarat as early as 75 A.D. Similarly Cambodian tradition and Chinese history indicate that the Hindu kingdom of Fou-Nan (comprising Cambodia, Cochin, China and Annam) was founded in the first or

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second century A.D. as the result of the migration of the Brahman Kauṇḍinya or the Kṣatriya, Āditya vaṁśa, king of Indraprastha, who married the daughter of the local Nāga king, Soma, and established the royal Somavaṁśa in the land. P. C. Bagchi suggests that Fou-Nan is the Chinese equivalent of Brahma (-deśa), by which the entire Indian colony was known. Only Burma or Brahmadeśa retains this name. It was in the first century after Christ that both the Śakas and Parthians or Pahlavas first made their far-reaching incursions into the Indus valley and Western India carving out kingdoms on ruins of the Sātavāhana empire. Political and social unsettlement that began in the Indus delta, Kathiawar and Western India and lasted for a whole millennium since Christ stimulated adventure and colonisation in the Far East that waxed and waned with political and economic conditions. In South India the recurrent conflicts between the Pallavas, the Pāṇḍyas, the Cholas and the Cheras, all maritime powers, as well as the pressure from the Imperial Vākāṭakas and their successors on the north promoted the first Pallava settlements in Malaya, Cambodia, Sumatra and Java between the first century B.C. and the second century A.D.

Brahmanical and Buddhist Cults of Overseas Colonisation

Some important cults and legends, Brāhmaṇical and other Buddhist, grew up in connection with Indian maritime enterprise. There is the Purāṇic legend of the sage Agastya drinking up the waters of the ocean in order to protect the coastal peoples of South India against the attacks of the Rākshasas, denizens of lands under the sea, who harried the coastal villages by stealthily arriving in the night by ship. Pannikar suggests that this Purāṇic version taken with the worship of Agastya in all the colonies indicates that the earliest Indian voyages to the islands were for the purpose of chasing pirates who had become a source of danger to coastal peoples. The Vāyu-Purāṇa mentions that Agastya paid visits to Varuṇadvīpa, Śaṅkhadvīpa, Malāyādvīpa and Yavadvīpa. In Java, Agastya is still worshipped as the teacher of Śaiva cult (Śiva-Guru) and is popular under the Javanese name of Valaing. Now Valaing means the pole-star that directs ships in uncharted seas. Thus it is that Agastya, at once the founder of Śaivism, and the patron saint of seamen and colonists, is still worshipped throughout South-east Asia, such worship having established itself in the Indian archi-

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pelago before the 7th century A.D. In some Javanese images we find the Śiva-guru or Bhaṭṭāraka-guru, Agastya associated with another sage, viz., Tṛṇavindu, son of Paraśurāma. We find the images of Agastya not only in Java but also in Cambodia. An inscription from Anghor Vat runs thus: "The Brāhmaṇ Agastya, born in the land of the Aryans, devoted to the worship of Śiva having come by his psychic powers to the land of the Cambodians, for the purpose of worshipping the Śiva-liṅga, known as Bhadreśvara, and having worshipped the god for a long time, attained to beatitude". Agastya accordingly is the mythical hero, harbinger and propagator of Aryan civilisation not only in South India but also in Indonesia. He is the founder of Śaivism, the spiritual preceptor or ancestor of many ruling princes, the builder of shrines and the patron saint of navigators, merchants and colonists overseas and shines as the star Canopus in the Indian Ocean. The cult of Agastya is the indissoluble cultural link between Bhārata and Dvīpāntara Bhārata. In his name even today the people of the islands take their oath: "So long as the Sun and the Moon last in our heavens, so long as the earth remains girt by the four seas, so long as the wind runs to the ten quarters, so long will reverence last to the name of Valaing (Agastya)". Other Brāhmaṇical cults that originated in connection with Indianisation overseas are those of Bhṛgu Ṛṣi and Hiraṇya-dāma in Kambuja.

Buddhism similarly threw out a popular cult of protection of seamen and colonists abroad. The patron Buddhist deity of seamen and overseas settlers was Dīpaṅkara Buddha (Buddha of the Isles). George Coedes points out that until the fifth century, most of the images found in South-east Asia were those of the Dīpaṅkara Buddha of the Amarāvatī school of art, which have been found at P'ong Tuk and Korat (Siam), Dong Duong (Annam), Palembang (Sumatra), Jamber (East Java) and Sampanga (Celebes). These images sometimes constitute the earliest evidence of Hinduisation of the respective regions. The oldest Sanskrit inscription of South-east Asia—that of Vo Canh of Champā—in an early South Indian script of 2nd or 3rd century A.D. is believed to be of Buddhist inspiration, as were some at least or those of Wellesly province in Malacca. The distribution of the Dīpaṅkara Buddha images of the Amarāvatī type in South East Asia during the early centuries of the millennium points to the fact that the first impetus to colonisation in the East came from the Śātavāhana Empire that dominated

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for about three centuries (73 B.C. to 218 A.D.) the strategic territory in middle India extending from sea to sea. Its capital was Pratiṣṭhāna (Paithana of Ptolemy) on the banks of the Godavari and its important sea-ports included Dhanakataka, Masulipatam and Konaraka on the Bay of Bengal while Vaijayanti (near Goa) and Kalyāṇa or Kalyāṇī were prosperous commercial emporia in the west. The Satavāhana Empire grew immensely rich out of trade and commerce, as evidenced by the excavation of the great Karli caves through the generosity of a single merchant prince of Vaijayantī, and of another Buddhist cave monastery mentioned in a Nāsik inscription as being excavated at the expense of the merchant prince Uṣavadāta. Names of numerous merchants of Kalyāṇa are also inscribed on the caves of Kanheri and Junnar. The stories of Guṇāḍhya who lived in Pratiṣṭhāna are full of ocean-going episodes and adventures while ships were inscribed on the coins of the empire. Merchants' voyages are mentioned from Tāmralipti to the islands of Katāha, Karpūra, Suvarṇa and Siṁhala, while there is a story of the hero of the seas (Samudra-śūra).

Another guardian deity of the sea is Maṇimekhalā who holds a blazing stone and is appointed by the gods to rescue ship-wrecked mariners. We come across her not only in the Mahājanaka and Śaṅkha Jātakas and the famous epic of the Tamil literature but also in the Cambodian and Siamese Rāmāyaṇas. This ocean deity belongs originally to the Tamil land but her fame and worship spread to Ceylon, Burma, Siam and Cambodia with the trade and colonisation enterprises of the Pallavas and the Cholas. Just as Agastya has his original home in Rameswaram in the extreme south of the Peninsula, so Maṇimekala's home, according to certain traditions, is Kāñcī or Kāverīpaddinam on the Coromandal Coast.

The Roles of Indian Maritime Empires in Colonisation

Indian scholars have largely disregarded the role of maritime power in Indian history such as that of the Sātavāhanas, of the Pallavas of Kāñcī with their seaport of Mammalapuram, of the Chalukyas of the Godavari valley who succeeded the Sātavāhanas as maritime powers, of the Palas of Bengal, of the Gaṅga kings of Kalinga and above all of the Cholas. No maritime empire of India could however maintain its supremacy over the eastern waters continuously for long. The Pallavas conquered the territory

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of the Cholas and the island of Ceylon in the 6th century A.D. The Pallava Empire retained its dominance from the early centuries of the millennium to the middle of the 8th century and established Brāhmaṇ colonies in Southern Malaya, in the Palembang valley in Sumatra, in Central Java, in eastern Borneo and in Cambodia. The Pallavas with their capital at Kāñcī, were exposed to constant pressure from the north, probably from the Ikshvākus and the Sālaṅkāyanas of the Kṛṣṇā-Godāvarī valley, which first led them to a planned and speedy policy of colonisation in Further India and the Indian Archipelago. It was not trading colonies but Brāhmaṇical settlements that were founded overseas with their rulers in some of them coming from the native population and invested with Brāhmaṇical and Pallava titles and names. These colonies had their growth and maturation from probably the first century B.C. to the seventh century A.D. when the Pallava Empire came into violent conflict with the Chālukyas. After the great reigns of Mahendra Varman (600-625 A.D.) and Narasiṁha Varman (625-645 A.D.) who conquered Ceylon the Pallava state was crushingly defeated by the Chālukyas in 740 A.D. The famous port of the Pallavas, Mamallapuram derived its name from Narasiṁha Varman Mahāmalla. The Chālukya Emperor Pulakeśi II (609 to 642) established a vast prosperous empire with its capital at Vātāpi extending from the banks of the Nerbuda to the region beyond the Kāverī on the Bay of Bengal. The naval strength of the Chālukyas is evidenced by an inscription mentioning that Pulikesena with a hundred ships attacked and subjugated the capital of a hostile kingdom.

In Bengal the rise of the Pāla Empire from the 8th to the 11th centuries A.D. which had a large navy and extended from Kanauj to Kalinga and under Mahīpāla at the beginning of the first millennium A.D. repulsed Rājendra Chola who invaded from the south was synchronous with maritime and colonising activity and the renaissance of art that profoundly influenced Indonesian art and religion. There are close epigraphical similarities between Pāla and Javanese inscriptions while the Pāla images, according to Kempers, enriched the art of Java with a number of motifs and types. The focus of overseas cultural influence was the University of Nālandā whence originated Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna or Tantrayāna that were essential features of South-east Asian culture for several centuries.

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The Cholas became a strong maritime power in the 11th century and the Tanjore inscriptions indicate that in 1025 A.D. Rajendra Chola conquered Nicobar, Keddah, Zambi, Sri Vijaya, Tenasserim and parts of Malaya, Siam and the eastern coast belt of Sumatra. The inscription of Rajendra Chola, dated 1030 A.D. describes the monarch as "despatching many ships in the midst of the rolling sea" and defeating the king of Kadaram (Katāha). The notable cities and kingdoms that fell into his hands as a result of this signal naval conquest were: Śrī Vijaya; Pannai (Pāni, in east Sumatra); Malaiyur (Malaya, probably the southern portion of Malaya); Mayirudingam (Jelutong in Johore or Selangor); Ilanga sogam (near Tenasserim); Ma-ppappalam (Ramanandesa); Mevilimbangam (Karmarangam in Ligor); Valaippanduru (sometimes identified with Pandurang); Talaittakkolam (Takkola in the Isthmus of Kra); Ma-damalingam (near the Bay of Bandow); Ilamuridesam (Lambri in North Sumatra); Ma-nakkavaram (the Nicobar islands); and Kederam (Keddah); the above identifications are principally based on such authorities as Coedes, S. Levi R. C. Majumdar. It will thus appear that the Chola Empire by this decisive victory obtained possession of the entire central and southern Malaya and the coast region of Sumatra, including the two strategic capital and port cities of Śrī Vijaya and Kataha. These overseas conquests of the Imperial Cholas were preceded by the subjugation of the entire eastern coast, including both Kalinga and the estuary of the Ganges. It was after obtaining the enormous resources of ships and sailors from Kalinga and Bengal that Rājendra Chola's daring project of challenging the supremacy of the Śailendra Empire in the Pacific was undertaken. There is no doubt that the adventurous merchants of the Tamil land, organised into guilds of fifteen hundred or more, variously named as Nānādeśis and Bananjas (merchants dealing with many countries) who were trading in the eastern islands in various merchandise such as precious stones, perfumes, spices, camphor, drugs, horses and elephants, and whose inscriptions have been found near Baros in Sumatra and other places, found their peaceful trade increasingly jeopardised by the greed and ambition of the Śailendra Emperors. Their Empire then comprised most of the Hindu settlements in the Pacific, rode astride its principal trade-routes and probably imposed heavy customs duties on the increasing volume of Indo-Chinese commerce. The Arab writers, indeed, frequently refer to the

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fabulous wealth of the Maharaja of Sri Vijaya derived from revenue in commerce. One Arab writer Ibn Khordadz-beh (844-848) significantly says, "His daily revenue amounts to two-hundred mans of gold. He prepares a solid brick of this gold and throws it into water, saying 'there is my treasure'". Masudi in his "Meadows of Gold" (443 A.D.) remarking about the kingdom of Sri Vijaya mentions: "Formerly there was a direct voyage between China and ports like Siraf and Oman. Now the port of Kalah serves as the meeting place for the mercantile navies of the two countries". Kalah is Tamil Kalagam, i.e. Kora or Keddah, the principal emporium of the lucrative commerce between the East and the West from the 1st to the 13th centuries. It may be that on this strategic site in the Malay peninsula the Śailendra Emperors detained all sea-going vessels on their voyages to India, Arabia or China for levying imposts as did the Portuguese in the later centuries at Malacca. The Chinese writer, Chao-ju-kua, speaking about the capital and of Śrī Vijaya observes: "This country being on the sea contains the most important point for trade, and controls the incoming and out-going ships of all the barbarians. Formerly they made use of iron chains to mark the boundary of the harbour. They wage war on water as well as on land, and their military organisation is excellent". This suggests that the Śailendra Emperors might have blocked the Malacca strait between Śrī-Vijaya and the Malay Peninsula with the "iron chains" permitting no sea-going vessels to pass until they paid a heavy toll to them. It is noteworthy that the Śailendra Empire had its strategic settlements on both sides of the principal straits in Indonesia so that they could effectively control and regulate the Eastern commerce, Indian, Chinese or Arab. Something of a kind of trade monopoly of the later Portuguese Empire seemed to have been asserted by the Śailendra dynasty. History repeats itself. Rajendra Chola's acquisition of the entire eastern sea-board enabled him to undertake the urgent task of guaranteeing safety and stability to Indian merchants and commerce in the Eastern world and of thus challenging the might and the new monopoly of the over-weening Śailendra Emperor. The struggle lasted for about two centuries, leaving both the empires exhausted and crippled in their resources, and promoting their ultimate disintegration. For about a century the Chola conquest of Sumatra and Malaya péninsula did, however, afford the long-sought protection to India's vital trade and cultural

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intercourse in the Pacific. After Rājendra Chola the over-seas exploits were continued by Vīra Rājendra (1063-1070), who definitely subjugated Kadaram which probably regained independence during his predecessor Rājādhirāja's pre-occupation with the Chālukyas. Through all these vicissitudes, the Chola empire gradually waned; while the empire of Śrī Vijaya maintained its power and splendour till the beginning of the 13th century. In fact the account of the Chinese writer Chao-ju-kua (1247-1258) shows Ceylon to be a vassal state of Śrī Vijaya. There were two expeditions to Ceylon from Kadaram, in the second of which Chandrabāhu was defeated and killed at the hands of the Pāṇḍyan king. With his death ended the glory of the Śailendra Empire. There is a graphic description of a naval expedition from India to Indonesia in Dhanapaṭa's romance, Tilakamanjarī (11th century), which Motichandra suggests is derived from Rājendra Chola's expedition (1012-1035) to the East Indies. In the 13th century the Pāndyas became strong on the sea and conquered Ceylon under Jātavarman Vīra-Pāndya.

The Pallavas were a most talented people who played an important role in transmitting the Gupta art and culture of the north to Southern India, and their artistic skill and commercial activity easily made them the most successful colonists and torch-bearers of culture in South-east Asia. The earliest Hindu shrines in Java on the Dieng plateau bear the impress of Pallava and Chālukya influences; while in Kambuja the Pallava colonisation is evident from the adoption of the title of Varman by the Kambuja kings, the prevalence of Śaivism and the motifs of art and architecture including the imaging of Brahmā in the temple of Bayon. Mammalapuram rock sculpture has its many replicas in Kambuja and the Malay Archipelago. Their great maritime rivals were the Chālukyas, who also made significant contributions to South-east Asian Hinduisation.

The epics of the Śātavāhanas, Pallavas, Chālukyas, Pālas and Cholas were accordingly memorable in the development of South-east Asian commerce and colonisation, based on maritime control of the Bay of Bengal that shifted from one power to another, and finally from the mainland to Sumātrā where was founded the big maritime Śrī Vijaya Empire of the Śailendras in the 8th century A.D. The Buddhist Śailendra Empire gradually extended its supremacy from Sumātrā over the whole of Malaysia, Java, Kam-

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buja and Champā and became the most powerful in the 8th century A.D. It won respect and recognition from the rulers of India and China, as noticed by several Arab merchants, one of them Ibn Rostch (903 A.D.) observes: "He is not regarded as the greatest among the kings of India, because he dwells in the islands. No other king is richer or more powerful than he and none has more revenue". The Śailendra Empire carried on a hundred years' war for the mastery of the Bay of Bengal with the Chola Empire which included for some time Malaya, the Nicobar Islands and Ceylon and ultimately emerged victorious retaining its maritime supremacy in the eastern waters for as many as full seven centuries.

Foreign Refugees from India

A new political factor in the Gupta and post Gupta age contributed greatly to colonisation and settlement in the East the incursion of the Śakas and Hūṇs into India and arrest of their advance in the Ganges Valley by the Gupta Emperors and Yasodharman and later on by Prabhākarvardhana and Harsha (606-647) that may have promoted some ambitious but thwarted Śaka, Gurjara or Indian princes to try their fortunes in the Eldorado of the East. Coedes suggests that a Kushān prince—perhaps a Muranda, expelled from the Ganges may have tried to retrieve his fortune in Funan. This hypothesis is supported by the mention of a mysterious "Scythian Brāhmaṇ" in Khmer inscriptions, the appearance of certain iconographic motifs of Iranian affinities and of the Scythian royal title (chandan) on the throne of Funan and the possible derivation of 'Kambuja' from the Iranian 'Kamboja'. Among the people who rendered acts of homage to Samudragupta are mentioned Śakas and Murundas. "The Gupta empire probably rose on the ruins of the Muruṇḍas", observes Mookerji. A Muruṇḍaraja overthrown and expelled by Samudragupta may have sought fresh fields and pastures new beyond the seas in Funan. Native tradition in Java mentions a Prince of Gujarat arriving much later in the beginning of the 7th century A.D., followed subsequently by two thousand more immigrants, probably defeated or displaced foreigners. This is synchronous with Harsha's subjugation of the kingdoms of Western Mālava or Valabhī with its dependencies—Ānandapura, Cutch, Sūrat and Sindh.

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Sea-ports and Routes in the Eastern Waters

The ancient Indian epic, the Ramayaṇa, is familiar with Java and Sumātrā. The Jātakas mention merchants from Champā, (Bhāgalpur), Benares and Broach bound for Suvarṇabhūmi, the Land of Gold, which was a generic term for the vast unexplored region. Scholars now identify Suvarṇabhūmi with Pegu or Lower Burma and Suvarṇadvīpa with the Malaya Peninsula. The Kathāsaritsāgara mentions in an itinerary Jalapura, Nārikela island, Kaṭāha island, Suvarṇadvīpa and Siṁhala. Suvarṇadvīpa is rich in gold. The Arab writers including Alberuni mention Suvarṇadvīpa as "the island of Zabag" and Sribuza or Śrī-Vijaya is regarded by them as the greatest of these islands. Now mediaeval Tamil literature mentions an overseas settlement called Saraka or Jaraka. This is obviously the Arabian Zabag. Other important sea-ports were Saliyur (opposite Ceylon), Negapatam (Nicama), Subura (Cuddalore), Arikanadu (Podua) and Kistnapatam (Melange). The famous Indian ports for the eastward voyages were Tāmralipti on the Bay (mentioned in the Jātakas and the Kathāsaritsāgara), Dantapura (capital of Kalinga, Dantan) Konarka or Konarkanagara (Ptolemy's Kannagara) and Cheli-Tala (Erandapalla mentioned by Hiuen-Tsang) in Orissa; Paloura (Palur in the Ganjam district); Dharanikota (Dhenukataka); Kantakasola (Contacossyla Ghantasala); Masulipatam (Ptolemy's Maisolia) on the mouth of the Kistna and Puhar or Kāverī-paddinam at the mouth of the Kāverī. The more important sea-routes towards the east were those from Paloura to the lower delta of Burma, from Masulīpatam (Dhānyakaṭaka) and Kāverī-paddinam to the Malay Peninsula and from Tāmralipti and Broach to Dvīpāntara. We read in the Kathāsaritsāgara that a merchant Chaṇḍrasvāmin in his eastern voyage visits the following islands in order: Nārikela-dvīpa (Nicobar); Kaṭāha-dvīpa (Keddah); Karpūra-dvīpa or Varusaka (Barus, north of Sumātrā) and Suvarṇa-dvīpa (Sumātrā) and finally goes to Siṁhala-dvīpa (Ceylon). This indicates the usual route in Pūrva Sāgara taken by merchants from Tāmralipti, and in the earlier centuries from Simhapura (modern Singur) and Dantapura (modern Dantan).

The Eastern ports at which the Indian merchants landed varied from time to time and included Śrī Kshetra (Prome), Suddhamavatī (Thatun at the head of the Gulf of Martaban), Takola (Takuapa

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at the Kra Isthmus), Kokkonagara (or Korbie), Kataha Kadaram (or Keddah) in the Malay Peninsula, (referred to under the form of Kotat or Kortaha by Ptolemy and of Kalagam in the Tamil Sangam literature and frequently mentioned in the Kathāsarit-sāgara and also by I-Tsing), Kamalanga (Hiuen Tsang's Kia-mo-lang-kia, modern Ligor), Śrī-Vijaya in Sumātrā, Pūrva Kalinga in Java, Tonking in Cambodia and Kwang-fu in China. The stages in the voyage in the Eastern seas, as mentioned by I-Tsing in the seventh century, were as follows: (1) Śrī Bhoja (which may be identified with Śrī-Vijaya) 20 days sail from China, (2) the country of the Naked People (the Nicobar Islands) 10 days' sail from Ka-cha which may be identified with Katāha Kadaram whence Nagapatam (Negapatam) is reached after one month, (3) Tāmralipti on the mouth of the Ganges, a month's sail from the Nicobar Islands (Nakavaram). For the return journey from India, the Chinese pilgrim gives the following details: (1) From Tāmralipti to Ka-cha, a voyage of 2 months, (2) from Ka-cha to Śrī Bhoja or Śrī-Vijaya, another month's voyage and (3) from Bhoja to Kwang-fu in China about a month's voyage more. Emperor Harsha while enquiring of Hiuen Tsang of the route he would prefer for return to China added, "If you select the southern sea-route then I will send you official attendants to accompany you". Tāmralipti, Śrī-Vijaya and Canton were for several centuries the great maritime and intellectual centres, thronged with Indian and Chinese traders, scholars and pilgrims that contributed towards bringing about an intellectual and spiritual intimacy between two great civilizations of the East, Indian and Chinese. A second India, Dvīpāntara Bhārata, intervened between India and China in the Eastern seas both geographically and culturally.

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CHAPTER XIX

THE TRIUMPH OF INDIAN ART AND CULTURE IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

The Colonisation of Sri-Kshetra (Burma) and Kataha (Malaya)

For well-nigh twenty centuries India was linked with "White India" beyond her north-western frontier, Middle Asia, Further India and the Indian Archipelago with ties of commerce, colonisation and culture. This significant phase in world history has not received the attention it deserves due mainly to ignorance. The island of Ceylon was for more than a millennium considered as a part of India since the celebrated settlement of Prince Vijaya Simha in the 5th century B. C. "White India" in the north-west and Brahmadesa or Burma in the east were also parts of India for about a millennium.

Definite proof of Indian colonisation of Burma long before the second century A.D. is afforded by Sanskrit place names mentioned by Ptolemy. Hindu settlements in the lower delta were collectively called Ramannadesa, 'Ramen-Mon.' Ancient kingdoms of Burma before the 2nd century included Sri-Kshetra or old Prome (modern Hmaza), Kalaspura on the mouth of the Sittang, Hastinapura (Jagaung in the north) and Suddhamavati on the sea-coast in the delta. Dvarāvati on the lower Menam Valley with its capital Navapuri (modern Lopbhuri) seems to have been mentioned by Hiuen-Tsang as also Isanapura and Champa further east. There was also another kingdom Haripunjaya (modern Lamphum) founded in the seventh century A. D. Numerous images of Buddha and scenes of his life and terra-cotta tablets have been unearthed by excavations at the ancient site of Sri-Kshetra in Burma, dating from the 5th to the 8th century A. D. The colonisation of Southern Burma was from South India as indicated by the resemblance of the Piyu characters, in which Burmese inscriptions and manuscripts were written, with early Kannada-Telugu script and the use of the Pallava royal title of Varman by the Burmese rulers. Both Hinduism and Buddhism thrived in Burma; a part of Sri-Kshetra was called Vishnu's city. The heyday of Burmese culture was not reached before the 11th century, when Aniruddha and his son

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Kynzittha ruled in Pagan (Arimardanapura), the new capital on the banks of the Irawadi, that with its fifty thousand pagodas became the most magnificent temple-city of Asia. Elegant representations of the Buddha in stone relief and of Jataka scenes in glazed terra-cotta panel are characteristic of the art of Pagan, the fresco paintings showing marked Pāla filiations. It is noteworthy that king Kynzittha, the most celebrated monarch of Burma who employed Indian architects for building the famous Ananda temple at Pagan, sent a special mission to Bodh-Gaya for the restoration of its well-known ancient shrine. The Malay Peninsula was known in the Puranas as the Malayadvīpa and the country of Kataha as Kaṭāha-dvīpa in the Kathāsaritsāgara. In Kedah and Wellesley we have Buddhist inscriptions which are written in Sanskrit and which belong to the fourth century A. D. The pillar at Bukit Miriam, erected by Buddhagupta the navigator, belongs to the third or fourth century A. D., while Rakta-mṛttikā, whence he comes, is identified with Ranga-mati (Red clay) in Murshidabad. Another inscription on the river Bhujang (Bhujaṅga) which is of Mahāyāna import, and which uses the script of the Pallava grantha is dated the sixth century A. D. On the same river Buddha images of Gupta style have been found. By the 5th century A. D. many Hindu kingdoms were also established in Malaya of which the most famous was Nakhon Sri Dharmamarat (Ligor). The well-known Ligor inscription of 275 A. D. gives evidence, according to Bosch, of the marriage of the Śailendra Emperor of Śrī-Vijaya with a daughter of the ruler of the old Sumātran Buddhist kingdom. With this marriage the Śailendras were converted to Buddhism and there markedly developed the influence of the Mahāyāna Buddhist Pāla culture from Bengal over this region. The three Mahāyanist bronzes of Avalokiteśvara from Perak give ample evidence of this far-reaching influence from Bengal. Winshedt mentions that the lotus motif derived from India is favourite in Malaya silver-ware craft.

The Colonisation of Kambuja (Cambodia and Cochin China)

The earliest Hindu kingdom in South-east Asia was Kambuja or Fu-nan (mountain) which comprised the whole of Cambodia and Cochin China. Kambuja was first civilized in the second century A. D. by an Indian Brāhmaṇ Kauṇḍinya (or Huen-t'ien) who married a naked Nāga girl-queen, named Lieon-ye, after de-

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feating her and wrapped her in a piece of covering. Kauṇḍinya introduced clothing into the savage country. An inscription of 658 from Champā thus states the connection between Kauṇḍinya and Indian Brahmanical culture. "It was in this place (Bhavapura) that Kauṇḍinya, the foremost of the Brāhmaṇs, planted the spear (śūla) which he had received from Aśvatthāmā, the son of Droṇa, the chief of Brāhmaṇs. There was a daughter of the Nāga king, named Somā, the first Governess of our dynasty on earth. Kauṇḍinya married her for the performance of domestic duties and the religious rites of the householder. God's will for the fulfilment of future events is beyond the comprehension of the human mind." About a century and a half elapsed between the foundation of the kingdom of Kambuja (Fu-nan) and the appearance there of the first Sanskrit inscription. Fu-nan, under the Kauṇḍinya dynasty, had under it several dependencies, of one of which the Chinese annals record: "More than a thousand Brāhmaṇs from India reside there. The people follow their doctrines and give them their daughters in marriage". The kingdom of Fu-nan was the dominant power of South-east Asia from the first century until nearly the middle of the sixth century when it was overthrown by Cheula, the country of the Khmers. One of the successors of Kauṇḍinya was Jayavarman who sent an ambassador to China in 484 A.D. Inscriptions in Sanskrit of Jayavarman and his son Rudravarman show Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Buddhism prevalent in that distant, first Hindu colony in the South-east, which became for several centuries the magnet of Western merchants and the meeting ground of the East and the West.

The Wonders of Indian Art in Kambuja

The sculpture and architecture of Kambuja in the 5th and 6th centuries showed strong Gupta influences, both Buddhist and Brahmanical; later on the exquisite Gupta art was replaced by the classic Khmer art. But until the 12th century Indian religion and mythology dominated this region. One of the wonders of the world is the magnificent city of Angkor Vat (Nagaradhāma or ancient Yaśodharāpura) with the grand temple of Bayon in the centre, built by kings Yaśovarman (about 900 A. D.) and Sūryavarman II (about 1125 A. D.). The city was built as the temple of God, Śivaloka; in the central tower dominating the pyramidal temple

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are massive faces of Śiva wrapped in meditation. "The Bayon", writes Sitwell, "can be said to be the most imaginative and singular in the world, more lovely than Angkor Vat, because more unearthy in its conception, a temple from a city in some other distant planet, imbued with the same elusive beauty that often lives between the lines of a great poem". The Nāga or serpent, the Khmer architectural motif, is Hinduised into the eternal āsana or seat of Vishṇu, with neither beginning nor end, forming the rail and guarding the temple entrance with its upreared sevenfold hood. On the temple walls the entire panorama of contemporary life and Brahmanical and Buddhist deities as well as myths and legends are represented with marvellous rhythm and vitality surpassing even the more beautiful reliefs and sculptures of Borobodur. The tales of the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, the Śrīmadbhāgavata, the Harivaṁśa and other stories connected with Vishṇu and Śiva are all illustrated in fine sculptures that adorn the walls of the famous temple. The churning of the Milky Sea, the fight between the Devas and the Asuras, the death of Bhīṣma, the scene of judgment of Yama, the banishment of Rāma, Rāma shooting the golden deer Mārīcha, the fight between Vāli and Sugrīva, the meeting between Sītā and Hanūmān in the Aśoka grove in Laṅkā, the fight between the armies of Rāma and Rāvaṇa as well as the battle between Hari and Kālanemi, the release of Aniruddha, Kṛṣṇa's holding the Govardhana mount aloft and other episodes of the life of Hari and Kṛṣṇa are superbly depicted. Here art has truthfully portrayed social ideals among peoples who did not know the legends, but who have absorbed them so sincerely and deeply that modern artists now draw frequently on them for their mural decorations in the pagodas of today. In the sanctus sanctorum Vishṇu, Śiva, Harihara and Avalokiteśvara are installed in their divine aloofness like stars that dwell apart. But in the paintings and bas-reliefs on the walls of the corridors, leading up to the divinities, are depicted the conjugal love and trials of Rāma and Sītā, the brotherly attachment of Lakshmaṇa, the fidelity of Hanūmān and the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī in an all too-human setting. The gods who are the apotheoses of the social virtues come down with their human desires and sufferings to the level of the common people; while the men and women in their devotion, thanksgiving and purity raise themselves to the level of the gods. Śiva in order to save the gods and all living creatures undertakes the stupendous

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sacrifice of drinking the poison cast by the ocean or by the universe Serpent Vāsukī. Vishṇu, Rāmacandra and Kṛṣṇa go through their hundred adventures for the sake of the protection of heaven and earth, gods and men against the Asuras. The shrine comprises also a number of altars and temples dedicated to Buddha and the Bodhisattva Lokeśvara, and indeed the serene, compassionate smiling Bodhisattva figures are some of the purest and noblest conceived and executed by the piety of Buddhism. Just as in Borobodur the figures of nude female worshippers arranged in serene yet animated throngs, with their infinitely sweet and chaste poses and gestures of adoration, cannot but be an unfailing source of inspiration for the pilgrims, so in Angkor Vat the images of Garuḍa and groups of Devatās in prayer, and of the Apsarās dancing before the gods are equally quiet and introspective. Such is the picture that the succession of mural paintings and sculptured panels unfolded before the throngs of observant pilgrims as they used to wend their way to the main shrine. Religions may change, kingdoms may perish, but the art which aids in elevating the moral tone of social life lives so long as society endures.

The Colonisation of Champa (Annam) and Dvaravati (Siam)

Champā was another ancient Hindu kingdom in the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, established probably by Śrī-Mara in the second century A.D. The Hindu kings of Champā were in continual conflict with the Chinese. For many of these Hindu kings only Chinese names are available—Fan Wen, Fan-Fo, Fan-Hu-Tà. The last is Bhadravarman who established a famous temple of Śiva under the name of Bhadreśvara Svāmī at the Mison that became the national centre of pilgrimage. Other kings of Champā were Gaṅgarāja, Vijayavarman and Rudravarman. The title of Varman indicates that the Brāhmaṇ descendents of the Nāga princess of Fu-nan became Kshatriyas. Champā remained Śaiva upto the 9th century when we find a dedication of a Śiva-liṅga associated with the erection of a Buddha image. A Buddhist monastery, Śrī-Vṛddha-Lokeśvara, was built in 911 A.D. Champā adopted wholesale social institutions and scheme of life of India, and many inscriptions refer to the epics and the Purāṇas. In the 12th century Champā was subjugated by Cambodia. There was a second Brāhmaṇ emigration to Funan (Cambodia) in the 4th century A.D. as shown by the legend of another Indian Kauṇḍinya's landing in

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Pan-pan, a small principality in the south under Fu-nan, recorded in Chinese annals. "The whole kingdom was stirred with joy. They came to him and chose him king. He changed all the rules according to the methods of India." He seems to have been a religious and social reformer with whose advent the spread of worship of the Almighty Śiva may have been associated. Siam under the name of Dvarāvatī formed part of the ancient empire of Kambuja that included a large part of Malay Peninsula. Up to the 6th century Cambodia was mainly Śaiva, but since then Buddhism began to thrive. In the eighth century both Champā and Cambodia were subdued by the Śailendra king of Śrī-Vijaya, and then Tāntrikism was introduced. Both religion and art showed a strong syncretic trend hardly met with elsewhere. The art of Dvarāvatī, found mainly at Lavapuri (Navapura), shows distinct Gupta filiations. Brahmanical and Buddhist images of Vishṇu, Śiva and Buddha are closely related to the art of Sārnāth, Mathurā and Ajantā. The Hinduised ruler of Chieng Mai invited Sumana, disciple of Udumbara, who effected certain reforms in Buddhism.

The Colonisation of Yava-dvipa

Although the earliest Indian reference to Yava-dvīpa occurs in the Rāmāyaṇa, the first Hindu kingdom seemed to have been established in Java only by the beginning of the second century A.D. A local tradition mentions, however, the first colonisation of the island by a prince called Aji Śaka who set out from Western India in A.D. 75. Several Sanskrit inscriptions in Java indicate a good deal of Hinduisation before Fa-Hien reached that island in 414 A.D. when he described that island as a stronghold of Brāhmanism, there being little trace of Buddhism. The Chinese pilgrim found 200 merchants, followers of Brahmanical religion, in the ship which carried him to Java. The motive for Javanese colonisation was accordingly the lure of trade. Sanskrit inscriptions in the Pallava script of the 4th or 5th century A.D. speak of the old Hindu kingdom of Taruṇa, and a king named Pūrṇavarman whose father is called Rājādhirāja Peshavarma, king of Arakan (433—436 A.D.), in a letter to the Chinese Court records that his kingdom is Buddhist. In East Borneo certain inscriptions, dated the 3rd or 4th century A.D., refer to a Brahmanical sacrifice and the installation of the sacrificial post (Yūpa). In Kalidasa's Raghuvaṁśaṃ we find the mention of the king of Anūpadeśa having installed

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sacrificial posts in "eighteen islands" over which he exercised suzerainty.

By the fifth century A.D. Buddhism took firm roots in Java. This was due to the missionary activity of Guṇavarman, once Prince of Kashmir, who became a monk and lived in Ceylon. According to a Chinese work (A.D. 519) he proceeded to Java where he converted the king and the queen-mother. Gradually the whole land was converted to Buddhism. On the invitation of the Chinese Emperor he sailed in a vessel belonging to the Hindu merchant Nandin for China and reached Nankin in A.D. 431. There he died. When I-Tsing visited Java at the end of the 7th century A.D., he found Buddhism not only in Java but also in other parts of Indonesia. "Many kings and chieftains in the islands of the Southern Ocean admire and believe (Buddhism) and their hearts are set on accumulating good actions.' The famous monk-teacher of Nālandā, Dharmapāla, visited Suvarṇadvīpa in the 7th century A.D. Early in the 8th century Vajrabodhi, a South Indian monk, came from Ceylon to Śrī-Vijaya and introduced Tāntrikism to this religion. Java under the rule of the Tang Emperors of China used to be called Ho-ling, a name derived from Kalinga; and there are several Javanese traditions pointing to the establishment of a Kalinga kingdom in the central portion of Java much earlier.

Indian colonisation in Java reached its acme in the 8th century when the cult of Agastya, the Vedic teacher of Śaivism, was introduced in Java from South India. Sculpture and architecture were dominated by Brahminism, particularly by Śaivism, and bore the impress of Gupta, Pallava and early Chālukyan art. The earliest temples of Java are Brahmanical and called after the heroes and heroines of the Epics. These belong to about the 8th century A.D. and are situated in Dieng plateau in Central Java, bearing obviously the impress of the classical Gupta art of India.

Then came the period of two big maritime Hindu empires of South-east Asia, viz., of Śrī-Vijaya and of Majapahit (or Tiktabilva). The empire of Śrī-Vijaya in Central Sumatra, founded by the Śailendra dynasty in the 6th century, comprised nearly the whole Indian Archipelago including the islands of Sumatra, Java, Bāli, Borneo the Philippine Islands and the Malay Statas and its military and naval strength eclipsed that of the Chola empire. R. C. Mazumdar suggests that the Śailendra dynasty originated in the

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Śaila dynasty in Northern India, and came into the Malay Peninsula through Burma. Coedes thinks that the true origin of the Śailendra dynasty is to be attributed to its desire for continuance of the ancient tradition of the kings of Fu-nan (Khmer Phonom means mountain) who took the title of King of the Mountain, Śailarāja. The Śailendras seem to have come under the inspiration of the Mahayānist or Tāntrika Buddhism from Bengal. Under the influence of the famous Buddhist sage of Bengal, Kumāraghoṣa who was the Guru of the Śailendras (Gauḍī Dvīpa-guru), the famous temple of Tārā was built in 778 A. D. Four years later an image of Mañjuśrī was dedicated by a royal priest from Gauḍa, who purified the Śailendra Emperor by the dust of his feet. The two inscriptions of Kalasan and Kelurak that testify to the above are inscribed in a North Indian script. The Emperor Bālapuratdeva of the Śailendra dynasty sent to Devapāla of Bengal (810-850) an embassy with the request to grant five villages to endow a monastery he had built at Nalanda. For several centuries the art and temple architecture of Sumatra and Java were profoundly influenced by the Pala art of Bengal. R. D. Banerjee refers to the specific similarity between the Bodhisattva from Chandi Mendut and the Buddha from Kurkihar and the so-called Nāgārjuna at Nālandā, between the stilted pose of the standing Hari Hara from Simping and the posture of several images of Vishṇu and Sūrya now in the Calcutta Museum, and between Vishṇu and Garuḍa from Belahan and Vishṇu from Deora in the Rajshahi Museum. The seated Buddhas at Borobodur bear a striking resemblance with the seventh and eighth century images of Buddha at Kurkihar and Nālandā, and with the undated images at Ujani, Mahakali and Sabhar in the Dacca museum in Eastern Bengal. The tenth century Padmapāṇi (copper) of Java resembles contemporary images of South Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. Much later the figure of Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva from Java of the 14th century (in Berlin Museum) has similar marked filiation with the Mañjuśrī image from Jalkundi (of the Dacca Museum) belonging to the 12th century, and the undated image of Eastern India (I. M. No. 627). At Palembang (Sumātra) taught a most celebrated Mahāyānist teacher of the time, Chandrakīrti, to whom came for study for twelve years the famous Atiśa Dvipañkara of Vikramaśilā who later in life spread the Mahāyāna in Nepal, Tibet and China (11th century).[2] The Śailendra Emperors built during 750-850 A.D. the great stupa of Borobodur which

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far surpasses in its stupendous size and artistic excellence the temples in the Indian home-land and is regarded as one of the wonders of the world.

Buddhist art reached the fullest expression of its broad humanism and compassion not within the frontiers of India, but amidst the tropical luxuriance and prolificness of the Indian Archipelago. In the great stūpa of Borobodur in Java we have the procession galleries adorned by a series of some two thousand bas-reliefs, illustrating the life of the Buddha according to the Lalitavistāra, the Divyāvadāna, the Karmavibhaṅga, the Gaṇḍavyūha and the Jātakamalā as well as various other legends. Referring to these Coomaraswamy observed, "We have here a third great illustrated Bible, similar in range, but more extensive than the reliefs of Sāñchi and the paintings of Ajantā". This is a profoundly tender, devout and sincere art, naturally lacking the austerity and abstraction of the early Buddhist primitives, but marvellously gracious, decorative and comprehensive. The narrative element is more conspicuous than at Ajantā, the craftsman closely adhering to the book, while he portrays social life, birds and animals and vegetation of his own land. The Gaṇḍavyūha relates in a magnificent series of panels at Borobodur the story of Sudana's 110 journeys in search of enlightenment throughout India until his final meeting with Maitreya. The reliefs at Borobodur vie with the classic Gupta sculpture in their clarity, spontaneity, grace and ardent spirit of adoration, but while man (and woman) are real and universal—man in his detachment, poise and serenity and woman in her chaste nudity and fervent self-surrender, the foliage, birds and animals are all local—Indonesian. The reliefs are so extensive that if laid end to end they would cover a space of about three miles. In these magnificent, sculptured panels which have been seen by thousands of devoted pilgrims through the centuries, we see unfolded a poignant epic drama of human emotions in a cosmic setting, where man reaps the fruits of good and evil deeds in previous births, where god, angel, man and animal form links in a continuous chain of sequence of existences, inexorably working out the universal Law of Karma, and where the profound lesson is to end the uninterrupted cycle of births and deaths through the absence of desires and the good deeds of love, compassion and sympathy for all. Nothing is discarded in the scenic representations—the pomp of wealth, the might of arms, the ardent passion

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and serene grace of women and the beauty of nature, but all is subdued by the sincere expression of the triumph of purity and wisdom as embodied in the story of the Buddha's Enlightenment. This triumph is expressed in every single gesture and mood of gods and angels, men and women in the vast panorama. Step by step from gallery to gallery the pilgrim is led through illustrations of the law of restribution of good and noble deeds, the stories of the Buddha's preparation in the course of hundreds of past lives, the episodes in the life of the historical Buddha until they witness the search for the highest wisdom revealed by the Bodhisattvas of the Mahāyāna—Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, Amoghasiddha and Vairocana. "When at last", writes Vogel, "the pilgrim has reached the summit of the stūpa, the phenomenal world vanishes from his sight and he is transported into the sphere of mere thought". The stūpa rises from the lotus pedestal and has no visible opening. This is entirely in consonance with the Mahāyāna doctrine that reduces all objects to states or forces of the mind (vijñāna).

Prambanan, the Illustrated Scripture of Brahmanism

Comparable with the sculptured panels in Borobodur are those of the Brahmanical temples of Lara-Jongrang in the Prambanan valley (late 9th century A. D.) which have not attracted the attention of art historians as these deserve. The ninth century was a period of Śaiva revival in Java. The Prambanan reliefs depict the story of the Rāmāyaṇa, and exhibit the same piety and spiritual idealism as we discern in Borobodur, but in addition a human sensitiveness and feeling for the tense and the dramatic. The art of Lara-Jongrang vies with, if it is not superior to, the art of Borobodur. In its melting tenderness, elegance and spirituality it resembles Gupta art, in its dynamic rhythm, restlessness and poignancy it carries on the plastic traditions of the Amarāvatī and Pallava school. Repetition and decorativeness make the art approximate to tapestry rather than to sculpture, retaining however all the dignity and grace of Borobodur. The unity of the realm of Becoming has nowhere been more sincerely expressd in sculpture than in Borobodur and Prambanan. Over the procession of human episodes which are linked together under a master plan, and in each of which every figure is absolutely unique and sincere in expression of face, gesture and pose of body, there broods the ineffable mystery

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of the oneness and harmony of life. In all ages the transformation of the metaphysical doctrines of the unity of life and immanence of the Deity into an emotional mysticism bridges the gulf between the concrete and the abstract, and between the human and the spiritual. Such idealism elevates, deepens and intensifies the artistic consciousness, inspiring some of the highest achievements in the realm of art.

Superiority of Colonial Art

The Śailendra Empire was gradually superseded by a dynasty of Javanese princes who built a new empire in east Java with its capital at Majapahit (Sanskrit Tiktabilva). By the middle of the 14th century, the Majapahit empire comprised the whole of the Indian Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula. The Brahmanical and Buddhist influences still continued and it was in the 14th and 15th centuries that the Javanese national epic Nāgara-Kertāgama was composed. Here we find the entire social and political scheme along with the social values and ideals of India reproduced for dissemination among the Javanese people. In these centuries also evolved the Javanese folk-art Wayang, (shadow play) illustrating the stories of the Indian Epics. Such is the assimilation of the Indian culture in Java that the people here actually believe that the great battle of the Mahābhārata was actually fought on their soil.

For nearly two millennia from the time of the colonisation of Ceylon by Prince Vijaya Siṃha to the time when the Indian homeland lost its independence, Hindu kings were ruling over the Malay Peninsula and the Indian Ocean from Ceylon to New Guinea. This vast cultural empire constituted Dvīpāntaŕa Bhārata, and was built up by the same principles of Dharmavijaya or Conquest of Righteousness that were formulated by Aśoka and reiterated by the Gupta emperors. This empire means Indianisation or spread of an organised Hindu culture among the primitive peoples of the region founded on the Hindu conception of royalty, the code of morality and rituals of Brāhmanism or Buddhism, the observance of the Dharmaśāstra and the use of Sanskrit as a means of expression. The Manu Smṛti and works based thereon still rule in Burma, Siam and Java. It is noteworthy that the Vāmana-purāṇa mentions that the nine islands or territories (nava-bheda) of Bhāratavarsha are sanctified (kṛtapāvanāh) by the performance of sacrifices,

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by warfare, by trade and other diverse cultural activities. Mention may be made of the Bahusuvarṇaka Yajña in Borneo indicated in an inscription of Mūlavarman. Sanskrit inscriptions in the Hindu colonies recall the exquisite specimens of classical Sanskrit poetry. The ideals of government and details of administration were imported from the Indian homeland, and Buddhist and Brāhmaṇ priests not only taught the codes and rituals but also the social gradation. The moral lessons of the Buddhist Jātakas, the Lalitavistāra and the Divyāvadāna and the Brahmanical epics and Purāṇas moulded the lives of the common people over the entire region. In Java the details of every episode described in the Indian epics and Purāṇas are well-known to the people of that country who have obtained them from their native translations, just as the Indian masses know about these from the versions of Tulsīdās, Kīrtivāsa and many other provincial writers. Java possesses certain fragments of Sanskrit literature that have been lost in India, such as the Javanese version of the old text of the Mahābhārata, just as Ceylon preserves the entire Buddhist Pali canon with its commentaries that have disappeared from India. Similarly such Indian sociological texts as the Śukranīti and Kāmandakīya-nīti are available in the Javanese versions laying the foundations of the Javanese scheme of polity. According to H. B. Sarkar and E. W. Thomas, the large old Kavi literature of Java, which appears to have begun in the 10th century A. D., includes a Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, a Śaivite Bhuvana-Kośa, Kāmāhayanikana, a Bṛhaspatitattva and a Sūrya-sevana; and there are works concerned with mantras. Further, there is nīti literature, Kāmandaka etc., law, Śivaśāsana, Devadaṇḍa etc., grammar, lexicography, medicine, cosmogony and history, many works representing the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa; also other poems, a Smara-dahana on the subject of Kumārasambhava, a Kṛshṇāyāna, a Kalayavanāntaka, an Agastya-parva; legends and romances of Java and Bali; and the Tāntri literature, similar to the Pañcatantra on which it is based. Some of the popular works include Arjuna Vivāha, the Virāṭaparva, the Bhāratayuddha and Harivaṁśa. An old Javanese kakawin or Kāvya is called Rāmavijaya. What are sometimes called the Javanese Vedas represent the Śaiva-Nalayira-pira-bandam; while the Balinese Vedas comprise selections of Vedic hymns, Upanishads and Mahāyāna texts. The law books in Java and Bali are based on the Smṛtis of Manu, Nārada and Yājñavalkya that are some-

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times followed in details for many items of civil and criminal law. There is also a reference to the Kutāra-mānava Śāstra by Bhṛgu. Which Indian text is meant is not clear. In Siam the most important text is a version of the Rāmāyaṇa, viz., the Rāma Kiun. The Mahābhārata furnishes themes of many stories in Siamese literature, while the Jātakas and various other Buddhist texts have also exercised strong, perhaps dominant, influence on the development of Siamese literature.

The art and architecture of the Śiva temple at Prambanan in Java where the tales from the Rāmāyaṇa are depicted in a series of bas-reliefs of the most exquisite kind surpass anything that has been executed in India. Similarly the images of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas at Chandi Mendut easily supersede in excellence the master-pieces of Gupta art in the Indian home-land. We have already referred to the celebrated stūpa of Borobodur and the temple of Aṅgkor Vāt, which are regarded by many as two of the finest monuments of architecture in the whole world, far eclipsing the grandeur of plan and skill of execution in Amarāvatī, Elephanta and Ellora.

Superiority of Colonial Religious Synthesis

To Dvīpāntara Bhārata migrated some of the best talent, religious zeal and idealism of India, and we find here a profound tolerance, forbearance and intermingling of Śaiva, Vaishṇava, Śākta, Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhist influences and products in richer and more prolific expressions excelling their original models in the Indian home-land. Thus some of the most significant syncretic developments in Indian religion took place on the soil of Java. In Java there is the composite image of Trimūrti—Brahmā, Vishṇu and Śiva combined together as in India. But one witnesses also a profound admixture of Brahmanical and Buddhist worship and doctrine outside India, in Java, Cambodia and Nepal. The syncretism of Hindu and Buddhist cults was promoted by the mystical doctrines of Tāntrikism. In Java it was discernible from the second half of the 9th century A.D. in the last phases of the Indo-Javanese period, when we find the conjoint worship of Śiva and Buddha (as described in the Javanese Mahāveda) and the Chaitya was built "for the great Brāhmans of both sects, Śiva and Buddha" as mentioned in the Bhairava temple at Chandī Singasarī (1292 A.D.). O. C. Ganguli also refers to the amalgamation of the two cults of

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Śiva and Buddha in Java under a common unified Śiva-Buddhist form of worship illustrated in the temple of Chandī Jawī. Here the main sanctum enshrines a Śiva image with the Buddha above it. In an old Javanese Mahāyānist text we meet with the assertion that Śiva is identical with Buddha. The inscription of Singasarī uses the composite word Śiva-Buddha, acknowledged as the national deity of the Javanese empire. The Majapahit Emperor Kṛta-nagara assumed the title of Śiva-Buddha. The phrases 'Sogata maheśvara' and 'Saiva-Saugata ṛsi' found in the inscriptions of Airlangga (1034-1041 A.D.) also express the amalgamation of the two religions. In Balinese theology Buddha is the younger brother of Śiva. Thus a unification which could not take place on the soil of India was quickly achieved in Java. May it be that it might be derived from the composite Śiva-Buddha worship of Pāla Bengal that could not articulate further or spread to other parts of India. This is a replica of the assimilation of Vishṇu and Buddha through the acceptance of the latter as one of the Ten Incarnations of Vishṇu and also of the amalgamation of the worship of Vishṇu and Śiva in the cults of Trimūrti, Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha. In the Jago temple at Mallam, Java, we have reliefs illustrating the Kṛshṇa legend in a Buddhist shrine. Here we find a rapprochment between Kṛshṇa Bhāgavatism and Buddhism and Dattātreya in Northern and Southern India, and of the assimilation of the cults of Vishṇu and Brahmā in Bengal. There is also the Javanese conception of Mahākāla, half-Brahmanical and half-Buddhist, with a sphinx-like smile of timeless wisdom, hands folded in Yogic mudrās and Buddhistic head-gear, and a number of human skulls at the base of the figure. There is the image of Amoghapāśa—Primordial Goddess of Destruction with her attendants; while there are also the Avalokiteśvaras in Siam closely embracing their Śaktis or Tārās, the latter being associated with Tāntrika Buddhism that had its hey-day in the bleak plateaus of Nepal and Tibet as in the prolific tropical lands of South-east Asia. In Champā corresponding to the Indian image of Hari-Hara, the amalgamation of the cults of Vishṇu and Śiva is represented by the composite form Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa. In Cambodia as well we find mention of Hari-Hara and of Vishṇu-Chandeśvaresana liṅga, and also the inclusion of the Buddha in a Trimūrti along with Brahmā and Vishṇu, the whole together with a liṅga being dedicated to Śiva (1067 A.D.). The Cambodian Trimūrti marks, accordingly a

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greater integration than the Trimūrti at Elephanta and elsewhere in India. The culmination of syncretism in religion seems to have been reached in both Java and Cambodia in the 11th century when Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni was devastating the cities and temples of India.

Economic Advantages to the Mother-country

It was from the coast-lands of Bengal, Kaliṅga, the Southern States and Gujerat that the pioneering activities of colonisation and Hinduisation seemed to have drawn their impetus. There was of course the sea-route across the Straits of Malacca (Tumasik) to the principal ports of the Indian Archipelago, Pūrva-Kaliṅga or Probolinggo in Java, Śri-Vijaya or Palembang in Sumatra and Tonkin in Cambodia. Success in trade and colonisation depended mostly upon whether a friendly or hostile power controlled the Straits and the prevalence of piracy. The Śailendra Emperors obtained mastery of both the Straits of Malacca and Sunda. There was also a land-route across Malaya along the Takuopa (with the port of Takola at its mouth) and along the Mekong through Dvarāvatī and Kambuja. Another overland route to Indo-China used by the Indian traders was through the hills of Assam or Manipur and Upper Burma along the Selwin valley to Tonking. Buddhabhadra, the Indian monk from Gandhāra, travelled with a companion of Fa-Hien by the Burma route going to Tonking on foot and from there by boat to China. The Burma route was again used by twenty Chinese monks for whom, according to I-Tsing, a Buddhist temple was built by Śrī-Gupta. From China in the reverse direction, Ka Tian (785-805 A.D.) travelled by the Burma land route from Tonking to Kāmarūpa which crossed the Karatoyā river, passed by Puṇḍravardhana, then ran across the Ganges to Kajangala and finally reached Magadha.

The process of colonisation began slowly and individually without any political motive or definite organisation. The merchants and monks came with the monsoon to the Archipelago and returned to the homeland at the end of the monsoon. Some were left behind to trade with the natives or to teach. Families also migrated but Indian migrants seemed to have intermarried freely with the natives. For both Fu-nan and Java we have records showing Kshatriya princes marrying the daughters of the rulers in these lands. Temples and monasteries were built, and more monks,

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priests and teachers came from India. The contact between the colony and the homeland was maintained and thus every social and religious movement in India had its subsequent impress upon the culture and social organisation of the New World. Mahāyāna Buddhism that grew up in the Indian homeland in the first centuries A.D. took five to six centuries to reach Greater India. According to the George Coedes the inscription of 684 (Talang Tuwo, Palembang) is the first dated evidence of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Greater India. I-Tsing, writing from Śrī-Vijaya, says that in all these countries of the Southern Seas Buddhism is embraced, and "mostly the system of Hīnayāna is adopted, except in Malaya where there are a few who belong to the Mahāyāna". Similarly the introduction of Tāntrikism was associated with the visit of Vajrabodhi to Sumatra about 700 A.D. Meanwhile the lucrative trade in spices and the search for gold, tin and other valuable minerals contributed to develop commercial activity between the Indian continent and the whole of South-east Asia. The Kathāsaritsāgara and the ancient Tamil Epics, Silappadikāram and Maṇimekhalai (written about the first centuries A.D.), are eloquent of the vast wealth acquired by Indian merchants from the Eastern trade; while Kālidāsa specifically mentions numbers of ships laden with spices from distant islands waiting in the ports of Kaliṅga. Indian colonists also exploited the tin and gold mines of Malaya and perhaps also of Sumatra. The familiar references in Indian literature beginning from the Jātakas to distant sea-voyages to "the islands of gold" indicate an actual search for and trade in gold and silver that were lacking in the Indian continent. Bengal, Kaliṅga, Āndhra and Gujerat merchants exported cotton goods to the region, and obtained in exchange gold, tin, ivory, spices and camphor. The Sanskrit names for the islands and regions of the Far East often refer to scarce minerals and agricultural or industrial products, and, as R. C. Mazumdar aptly suggests, this indicates the commercial origin of Indian colonisation and settlement. The illustrations are Suvarṇa-dvīpa (with variants, Hemakūṭa, Suvarṇa-Kūla, Suvarṇa-Kuḍya), Rūpyaka-dvīpa, Tāmra-dvīpa, Yava-dvīpa, Laṅkā-dvīpa, Takkola, Śaṅkha-dvīpa and Karpūra-dvīpa. Ships plied regularly from Broach and the Gujerat ports in the West, Tāmralipti and Harikela (the principal ports at the mouth of the Ganges), Charitra and Palaura in Kaliṅga, Kadura (Kuduru) and Ghantaśīla at the mouths of the Godāvarī and the

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Krishna, Kāverīpattanam (at the mouth of the Kāverī) and Tondai in the Chola country across the straits of Malacca for trade with Java, Sumatra, Kambuja and China. Fa-Hien mentions that large ships carrying over 200 passengers frequently made the voyage from Ceylon to Java. The names of two great early navigators (Mahānāvika) in the Eastern waters have come down to us—Buddhagupta whose inscription in Malaya (4th to 5th century A.D.) mentions that he hails from the town of Red Clay, probably Rangamatti in the district of Murshidabad, Bengal. Another Mahānāvika's name, Sivaka, is mentioned in an early Prākṛt inscription at Kaṇṭakasola (Ghantasālā) on the mouth of the Kṛiṣṇā river. The ships that plied in the Eastern seas were called "Colandiophonta", according to the author of the Periplus. "Colandiophonta built for the trade to Malacca, perhaps to China, were exceedingly large and stout".

The lure of riches in the El Dorado, the spirit of adventure of princes and warriors displaced by foreign invasions in the homeland and the religious zeal of scholar-monks maintained a constant stream of migration of merchants, Kshatriya nobles and Brāhmaṇs and Buddhist priests and monks. It was thus that out of the first Indian colonies and settlements grew the great kingdoms of Fu-nan, Champā, Pan-Pan, Nan-chao, Śrī-Vijaya and Majapahit. Thus a Greater India established itself in the Indian Ocean without design or conquest but by a gradual fusion of races and peoples, and social and cultural uplift of the natives through the dissemination of Indian cults, customs, laws, social institutions and forms of government.

Economic and Cultural Development of the Colonies

Buddhism inveighed against and obliterated the barriers of caste and was on the whole favourable to racial admixture in the colonies. In the Indian continent as well the assimilation of the Indo-Scythians, Hūṇs, Ābhīras, Gurjaras and other Mlecchas into the Hindu caste scheme was going on apace in the Gupta period. False ideas of racial purity or pollution by contact with primitives and barbarians after long sea-voyages did not deter Brāhmaṇ, Kshatriya and other colonists from inter-marrying with the natives. Thus Hindu communities could be established in the distant lands where Indian laws, customs and manners could be easily introduced, and even "the poor people could wear pieces of cloth", and worship Hindu and Buddhist deities in the numerous temples

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built for them and in the manner which Brāhmaṇ and Buddhist priests taught them. In the foreign lands the Brahmanical scripture and the law of the Buddha were equally cherished, and on the whole there was a greater rapproachment of Hinduism and Buddhism than in the homeland. The most splendid and colossal Hindu and Buddhist temples, recognised today as wonders of human engineering, craftsmanship and art, were built not in India, but in Java and Cambodia. On the walls of the temples of Java and Cambodia the tales of the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, the Harivaṁśa, the Jātakas or the Lalitavistara were depicted and Hindu religion and piety found expression also in the inscriptions. Libraries were established in temples that became important centres of Sanskrit learning and vihāras and hospitals sprang up. An inscription of Jayavarman II, who built a Buddhist temple outside Angkor Thom, (1186), records the maintenance of 102 hospitals throughout the kingdom for distribution of medicaments and free treatment of diseases, manned by 81,000 men and women and dedicated to the Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyaguru, the Divine Healer, whose worship extended from Tibet to Manchuria and Japan and from China to Cambodia. The spread of Indian culture was associated everywhere with a strong humanitarian trend and ministration of the sick and the suffering in South-east Asia, China and Japan, where Bhaiṣajyaguru is still adored with his bowl of medicines and myrobalan-fruit. F. W. Thomas points out that in the entire region of Further India and Malaysia the earliest, strongest and most persistent characteristic of the Indian civilization that flourished its Brahmanic character: the completeness of the assimilation of Indian modes of expression, literary styles and references, mythological and religious apparatus is highly remarkable: the literary forms of the inscriptions from the earliest Campā records of the second or third century A. D. agree with the corresponding Indian documents, showing quite similar rhetorical tropes, śleṣas and allusions and so forth. "All this, together with the evidence of alphabetical, archaeological and art correspondences, proves that between these countries and India a fairly continuous series of communications, direct or indirect, was maintained." Buddhism of the Mahāyāna school was introduced later than Brahmanism, and the syncretic tendency of amalgamation of the Mahāyāna with Śaivism and also with Tāntrikism came to this region from Bengal. Śrī-Vijaya and Java under the Śailendra Emperors were the

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important foci in the diffusion of religious movements from Bengal. Thus Indianisation proceeded apace. As late as 1365 A. D. a Javanese text mentions several Indian regions whose migrants came to the capital of Java "unceasingly in large numbers. They came in ships with merchandise. Monks and distinguished Brāhmaṇs also came from these lands and were entertained". Commerce, colonisation and Indianisation progressed with temporary ups and downs till at least the end of 14th century. Even the names of the towns, provinces and kingdoms were derived from Sanskrit. Regions of India such as Kamboja, Gandhāra, Kalinga, Daśārṇa, Malava, Śri-Kshetra, Mithilā and Ayodhyā transplanted themselves across the seas; while ancient far-famed Indian towns such as Kauśāmbī, Mathurā, Champā, Dvarāvatī and Amarāvatī reappeared and revived hoary memories and traditions in the colonies and settlements of the East. Just as in the north-western Indian borderlands a second holy land of Buddhism emerged, so in the upper valleys of the Mekong and the Red River the sacred sites of Buddhism were replanted: the Bodhi tree, the Gṛdhrakūta, Pippala cave and even the mansion of Upagupta. In far-off Campā, the inscriptions in Sanskrit provide remarkably elegant examples of classical Sanskrit poetry resembling those composed by Hariṣeṇa, Vatsabhatti and Ravikīrti. Methods of polity, titles and designations of officers became Hindu. The Law of Karma supplied the source and ground of morals as the philosophy of the Mahāyāna and the Vedānta the inspiration of worship. The entire heritage of Indian culture in Sanskrit and of art and architecture came to belong to the people. Their old literatures are saturated with Hindu and Buddhist myths, legends and fables. Indian place names and Sanskrit words have been taken over to the colonial languages without much variations. Even in the distant islands of the Philippines some of the primitive peoples still use the Indian alphabets. Many of the Philippine dialects bear strong resemblance to South Indian languages; while the Indonesian language shows strong affinity with Hindi and Urdu. In Java and Bali the dance, music, mudrā and drama are Indian. Sacredotalism, Buddhist and Brāhmaṇ priesthood and the caste system still persist in Bali.

The colonies on their side gave to the motherland not only vast wealth accruing from the trade in spices, perfumes and camphor that satisfied the increasing demand of the Roman Empire and gold, tin, ivory, ebony, sandal and other scarce commodities that

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India herself required but also Sanskrit learning and culture. Some of the colonial teachers like Chandrakīrti had an all-Asian reputation. I-Tsing mentions another man of learning, Śākyakīrti of Śrī-Vijaya, who travelled through different parts of India and whose reputation spread far beyond the confines of Suvarṇadvīpa. Scholars and monks, colonial and Indian, used to travel widely. I-Tsing refers to Mahāyānapradīpa, a venerable Chinese monk, pupil of Hiuen Tsang, who travelled in Dvārāvatī, Ceylon and South India and settled ultimately in a monastery of Tāmralipti. We learn from the Tibetan source that Buddhist monks of Bengal were sent in the reign of Nayapāla to Suvarṇadvīpa for their education. The colonial rulers founded sanctuaries not only in their own territories but also in India. The Śailendra Emperor, Bālaputradeva, built a monastery at Nālandā and endowed it with five villages in the reign of Devapāla of Bengal (815-855). Another Śailendra Emperor, Maravijayuttanga Varman, approached (1000 A. D.) the Chola King, Rājarāja the Great, for a grant of land at Negapatam on which to build a Buddhist monastery in the name of his father. Gradually some of the colonial arts could even outshine their models in the home-land.

Indian Colonisation, a Unique Episode in World History

The Moslem conquest of India and the consequent loss of cultural initiative in the home-land led to the gradual choking of those broad invigorating currents of culture that had been flowing unimpeded for nearly 2000 years from the Indian continent. From about the beginning of the 15th century Indian colonial culture, torn from its vital roots in the homeland, was gradually overwhelmed by the indigenous Indonesian culture looking back to the ancient Malayo-Polynesian stratum until the Moslems spread out into the Indian Ocean and introduced Islam by force into this region in the 15th century A.D. The traditional, gentle Indian conquest of righteousness, with its elevating and refining social effects upon the less advanced peoples, was superseded by the conquest of arms, with its fateful consequences upon dependencies. In spite of the conversion of the whole Indian Archipelago into Islam, Indonesian culture is still largely grounded in the pre-Moslem Indian pattern. In the small island of Bālī, where a considerable proportion of the population took refuge, along with the royal dynasty, after the Moslem conquest, Hindu culture and

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religion still thrive. The social structure is here represented by a tempered caste system, and people honour the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gītā and throng and worship in temples of Śiva and Vishṇu, where Brāhmaṇ priests (padandas) officiate at Hindu rituals and observances. Many customs and ceremonies go back at least to the 10th century A.D. if not earlier, of the Indian homeland, and there is a curious admixture of Śaivism, Tāntrikism and the worship of the Sun, not met with on the soil of India. In 1908 there occurred here the sad tragedy of the collective sacrifice of the Balinese chief and of his wives and followers, who preferred death to the dishonour of submission to the Dutch colonial authorities. Bālī is the sole vestigial Dvīpamaya Bhārata in the ocean of Moslem and European faith and culture.

The colonising enterprise and the spread of Indian culture in Central Asia and China, the Malay Peninsula and the Indian Archipelago forms a most glorious, though neglected, episode in the history of civilization. Human history cannot record another movement comparable with the silent fusion of races, customs and manners and peaceful spread of culture among the less advanced and primitive peoples of Central and South-eastern Asia that continued for not less than twenty centuries. For the first time in the history of the world, colonialism was identified with neither exploitation nor violence but with the uplift of backward races to a higher level of culture, religion and morals. "From Persia to the Chinese Sea", observes Sylvain Levi, "from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Socotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales and her civilization. She has left indelible imprints on one-fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries. She has a right to reclaim in universal history the rank that ignorance has refused her for a long time, and to hold her place among the great nations summarising and symbolising the spirit of Humanity". In the future era of co-operation among the Asian races and peoples, released from the bondage and consequences of economic imperialism, the twenty century-old Indian ideal and policy of cultural ascendancy, as epitomised and symbolised by the pregnant ancient phrases of Brahmadeśa and Dvīpāntara Bhārata, and the Mahāyāna conception of Trailokya Vijaya, may again shape the course of Asian development and culture, and weave a new pattern of brotherhood among the resurgent peoples of the East.

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EXPLANATION OF THE PLATES

1. Relief from the Gateway at Sanchi. Second-first Century B.C.

Sāñcī, ancient Caityagiri, or Vidiśāgiri or Kākanādaboṭa—Mahāvihāra,—at the confluence of the Vetravatī (Betwa) and the Vidiśā (Besali) in the eastern scarp of the Malwa plateau, stood at the junction of the ancient Mauryan routes from Taxila and Mathura in the north-west and from Kauśāmbī and Pāṭaliputra in the Ganges basin to Bhṛgukaccha on the Arabian Sea and to Pratiṣthāna and Amarāvatī in the Deccan. It was on the main thoroughfare of many ancient migrations, colonisations and conquests from the north-west and the east to the south and the focus of the blend of Ārya and Dakṣiṇa cultural and artistic influences. Close by was Besnagara or Vidiśā, the ancient city of Avanti-rāṣṭra under the Imperial Mauryas (3rd century B.C.); Śuṅga (184-72 B.C.) and Sātavāhana (72-25 B.C.) layers of architecture and sculpture make Sāñcī a most complete and magnificent illustration of early Indian art.

Before the famous stūpa that enshrines the relics of the Buddha and of his famous disciples Sāriputta, Moggalāna and other Buddhist divines, and symbolises in Buddhist art the Great Passing-away, there were built gateways with railings, pillars and archways, densely packed with superb reliefs. The encircling rails take the place of the older wooden fencing that used to regulate the Pilgrim's Progress round the shrine, symbolising in Indian art the cosmic round and procession of the stars in heaven. The sculptured reliefs on these railings have rightly taken their place among the immortal creations in the history of world art. These include (1) the adoration of the various trees of the forest—sāla, śirīṣa, udumbara, nyagrodha and aśvattha—associated with the illumination of the five Mānuṣī Buddhas; (2) the adoration of the Buddha, the lord of all sentient creatures, (sarva-sattva), by the forest animals—buffaloes, lions and antelopes and the garuḍa and serpent—who have abjured their natural enmity in His presence; (3) the great events of Nativity, Departure and Passing-away which are repeated many times to represent the eternal, metaphysical character of the Miracles. The upper panel illustrates the Miracle of

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Buddha's departure from the palace (seen on the extreme left). The horse Kanthaka over which is borne the royal umbrella symbolises the Buddha. It represents the Episode in four successive stages, ending with the return of the horse without the Rider, symbolically represented by His sacred foot-prints on the extreme right; and (4) the devout worship of the Buddha relics by such royal personages as Bimbisāra, Ajātaśatru, Prasenajit and Asoka. The lower panel shows the cermonial visit of Asoka and his queen Tiṣyarakṣitā to the Bodhi tree.

Before the figure of the Buddha was sculptured, he was represented by such animals as the elephant, the horse and the lion associated with some memorable event in his life as the Arhat, or again the monkey and the deer were sculptured as representing the Bodhisattva in one of his past lives of heroic self-sacrifice described so vividly in the Jātaka legends. In keeping with the catholic art temper of the Maurya, Śuṅga and Sātavāhana ages, the undying folk-cults of Yakshas and Yakshīs, Nāgas and Gandharvas and the worship of Indra, Sūrya and Gaja-Lakṣmī of orthodox Brahmanism, have been implanted in the art of Sāñcī and Bhārhut. The popular deities—not merely the Āryan gods but also the folk-godlings and fertility spirits—partake of the enveloping spirit of joy and compassion, and the lithe Yakshī swings genially in the mango tree bracket as the angelic guardian of the Buddha's gateway, nodding to the reverential gesture of untold thousands of pilgrims down the procession of centuries. The architecture of the Sāñcī gateway and balustrade, embodying not the grandeur and voluptuous taste of rich monarchs, but the piety, devotion and love of truth of the common people, have profoundly influenced the norms of building-art across the centuries. Very early in Indian art the tradition of architecture and sculpture forming an integral whole, in which no sharp line is drawn between the decorative designs and architectural patterns, is well established. The flowing linear rhythm of composition of the low reliefs, sometimes crowded, sometimes sparse as required by the moving drama of popular story-telling, now placid, now boisterous, also bears testimony to the artistic elegance and rhythmical discipline reached in that early age, while even the animals, so exquisitely wrought, share with man moral dignity and enjoyment of bliss that Buddhism brought to the Indian world.

The Sāñcī reliefs indeed admirably enshrine the unique art

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technique of achieving a perfect harmony in the treatment of man, his animal kindred, and the flora, all linked together in the procession of life and karma, and breathing the essentially Indian spirit of dignity, compassion and brotherhood not to be found in the art motifs of the supreme creations either of Hellas or China of the classical periods. On the other hand man, animal, tree and flora are sculptured with a naturalism, freedom and spontaneity of feeling that even Greek art could not equal. The delicacy and sensibility of ivory workers, whose guild is mentioned in connection with the construction of one of the relic mounds, have left their indelible impress on the animal figures. With these have mingled the broad humanism and the strong faith in the continuity and solidarity of all sentient life which Buddhism and Jainism introjected into the popular consciousness. Nowhere in the history of art have elephants, deer, monkeys and peacocks in particular been sculptured with such power of observation and almost human quality. Sāñcī, like Sārnāth, has been the focus of attraction of Buddhist pilgrims from many lands of Asia for well-nigh two millennia. It has remained in the Buddhist mind the perennial symbol of man's infinite tenderness and sympathy for all sentient creatures, as taught by the life of the multi-born Bodhisattva, and of man's supreme moral worth, as taught by the illumination of the Tathāgata.

A unique combination of vigour and exuberance of expression with a suffused lyricism and of fullness of modelling with a sinuously gliding linear treatment; a dynamic rhythm of composition with diagonal movement of throngs of figures; a balanced arrangement of groups of reliefs at various angles, and symmetrical organisation of planes; a clever use of the chiaroscuro and the shaded underground for setting off the movement of plastic mass in finely graduated bas-relief, aided by the strong feeling for volume: all these mark the maturation of sculpture at Sāñcī, buoyant, resourceful and even daring as it depicts delightfully tale after tale hardly permitting the canons of a hieratic art to obscure the ancient profound interest in the art of story-telling that migrated beyond India to Asia Minor and the West through Taxila as early as the 6th century B.C. The stones of Sāñcī tell stories and legends that are as old as the rivers, hills and forests of India, more ancient than the great organised religions which utilised and interpreted them for their own purpose. Thus the sculpture of Sāñcī is essentially realistic and dramatic and exhibits the moral earnestness, freedom of composition and

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expansiveness of frame-work that constitute the abiding legacy of Indian art. Such techniques and values indeed gained in refinement and delicacy across the centuries. The Sāñcī plastic tradition has been perennial and inexhaustible in India.

2. Yakshi or Apsara (Tree-nymph-cum Erotic Woman) from Mathura. 2nd Century A.D.

Mathurā art is akin more to Bhārhut, the ancient great art centre on the highway to the Deccan between Kauśāmbī and the great forest, than to Sāñī lying on the other ancient road to the South across the Narmadā. On the railings, gateways and pillars of the Jain or Buddhist stūpas and caityas at Mathurā there were carved superb sculptured reliefs. Here also the gods and goddesses of the more ancient popular religion—Yakshīs, Nāgas, Devatās and Vṛkṣakas—come to terms with the higher religion, Jainism, Buddhism or Hinduism. The epic mentions the "caitya vṛkṣa" or sacred tree: "Not even the leaf of a caitya may be destroyed, for caityas are the resort of Devas, Yakshas, Nāgas, Apsarās and Bhūtas." Thus the Yakshī is the nude popular godling of Brahmanism, a propitious symbol of vegetative power that Buddhism assimilates from folk religion. Indeed it was at Mathurā in the Upper Ganges valley that the first fusion of Aryan and Dravidian culture and art took place—the integration of Aryan intellectualism and Dravidian bhakti, of abstract or symbolic Aryan and artistic or decorative Dravidian art-motifs. The Vṛkṣakā or the Dyad or Tree nymph, with the prostrate dwarf vehicle (nara-vāhana) under her feet, is a reminder of the myth and cult of fertility of Dravidian India. One of the figures holds a parrot which is the vehicle of the God of Love and the traditional companion of the Indian hetaira (gaṇikā). Besides the Yakṣī, Apsarā or Devatā, associated with the kadamba, sāla and aśoka trees connected with fecundity, there are also manifold figures of the charming mortal gaṇikā (hetaira) bathing under a water-fall, holding the bird, bird cage, aśoka branch, lotus bud or spray of mangoes, filling a drinking bowl or wringing water from her tresses at Mathurā. Some of these also stand on the back of a dwarf or the latter crouches at her feet supplicating for the lotus buds. May be the dwarf symbolises the enslavement of man by feminine attractiveness in folk culture. In India while the sexual and religious motifs were always blended together, the

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hetaira was a familiar figure in both secular literature such as Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra and religious literature such as the Divyāvadāna. Whether the Yakshī at Bhārhut, Bodhgayā, Sāñcī and Mathurā is a Devatā who symbolises the beauty of the flowering lotus, sāla and kadamba, the piercing of trees by the moon beam or the interplay of sunlight on water or the voluptous mortal woman (with such names as Candrā or Sudarśanā Yakṣiṇī as at Bhārhut) depends entirely upon the context. In Buddhist legend and art both the Yakṣiṇī demi-goddess and the sinful woman are subdued by the spiritual power of the Tathāgata. The Yakshī Apsarā or Gaṇikā is modelled with the same delicacy and undulating rhythm of a fresh mango-bud as is discernible in the Devatā of Sāñcī and Bhārhut. Yet the sensuousness of the soft nude body is tempered by the discipline of an intensely restrained linearism. Balancing herself like the full-blown blossom, she is not provocative but remains absorbed in her dignity and joy of life. The Dravidian feeling for the sensuous fullness of life is here subordinated to the Aryan discipline and abstraction. Animated scenes from the Buddhist Jātaka legends also appear in some of the Mathurā reliefs in which the animal figures bear evidence of a new-born tenderness, kinship and affection far different from the naive naturalism of Greek and the abstract and symbolic treatment of Chinese art. Buddhism, as it incorporates the indigenous cults of the soil and vegetation, gains in impulsion and releases the surge of popular enthusiasm, while introducing a new feeling for life and careful observation in the treatment of animal, flower and foliage.

The tribhaṅga pose of the nude Yakshī, with its sinuous flexion of the thin waist and swelling hips and breasts of the Indian classical ideal, discernible whether at Mathurā or at Bhārhut and Sāñcī, became the established motif in Indian art for the representation of female loveliness. It is remarkable how in what was practically the beginning of Indian sculpture, the extraordinary buoyancy and vitality of the full-limbed human and animal figures and the freedom of plastic rhythm and movement could be combined with a delicacy and experience of psychological characterisation, an intent frolicsomeness, capriciousness and voluptuousness, a tumultous onrush of mass emotions gripping the multitude or a serene suffused spirit of tenderness and humanism. Even from the viewpoint of technique, Greek art took many centuries to evolve a similar adroit treatment of the plastic structure and rhythm of

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human figures. What was achieved in the West through a gradual progress from the imaging of two-dimensional reliefs seemed to have been reached all at once in early Indian sculpture, with its vigorous modelling in the round and genuine sense of the cubic in the interplay of planes and lights and shadows of the underground. The treatment of the swaying grace of the feminine body with its threefold flexion, ample bosom and smooth abdomen and its patterned flowing, transparent muslin as well as jewellery organically one with it, continues throughout Indian art. The melodious quality and gliding plastic rhythm of the Yakṣīs and Vṛkṣakās of Bhārhut, Sāñcī and Mathurā are renovated and refined in the Devīs and River Goddesses of Gupta art and the Apsarās, Sālabhañjikās, and Nāyikās of the medieval period.

Mathurā as the most famous ancient town and seat of religious and cultural movements in the Upper Ganges basin, connected with Taxila in the north-west, Pāṭaliputra in the east and the sea-port of Bhārukaccha on the Arabian Sea, continued to bear witness for a whole millennium to foreign Assyrian, Romano-Buddhist as well as indigenous folk-influences in her art methods and techniques and to the popular cults of Trees and Rivers and Yakṣas and Yakṣīs, Jainism, Buddhism and Bhagavatism in her art motifs and expressions. Mathurā enshrined the images of Yakṣas and Yakṣīs of pre-historic folk-religion and was the birth-place of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva and of Bhagavatism. It bore in its bosom according to an ancient tradition, the relics of Sāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, Ānanda and Rāhula and the monastery of Upagupta of Aśokan fame and carved the first images of Kṛṣṇa, the Buddha, the Jina and the Bodhisattva, the precious gifts of Gupta art to the succeeding centuries. It was because of the maturation that Mathurā art reached so early that it could dominate throughout the north and handle effectively the grandiose myths of Mahāyāna Buddhism and resurrected Brahmanism under the Imperial Guptas that have in large measure shaped modern Indian thought.

3. Figures of Donors from Kanheri. 2nd Century A.D.

The Sātavāhanas established an Empire in the Deccan extending from coast to coast at the end of the last millennium and built a number of cave monasteries of which the most important were at Bedsa, Pitalkhora, Kondane, Ajanta, Nasik, Bhaja, Karle and Kanheri, all in the western maritime region enriched by the commerce of the

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famous ports of Bhṛgukaccha and Kalyāṇī. At Nasik, Karle and Kanheri in particular sculpture is abundant, subordinated to the cave architecture, and to the contemplative spirit of man in the rock-cut monastery with its halls, places of worship and cells for meditation. At Kanheri while there is a highly decorated railing of the type of Amarāvatī, the Sātavāhana capital on the east, the figures of donors reproduced above bear the impress of the sculptures of the Yaksha of Mathurā and the guardian of Sāñcī of the early centuries B.C. The posture and the dress are very similar but the Kanherī and Karle figures are more massive and energised and less sophisticated. The vigorous stroke takes a sweep from the shoulders to the ankles, as at Mathurā and Sāñchī, following the contours of the body, fully carved in the round and adorned with necklaces and garlands that smoothly fit in with the curves of the limbs. The amplitude and harmony of modelling at Karle and Kanheri for the first time in Indian art bear the message of plenitude of health, physical vigour and buoyancy (compare also the well-known Karle couple of the same period) that are no less ennobling than the ethereality and contentment of the gods. Truly the figures are as alive as Greek sculptures, and show a free plastic movement and vitality and compositional rhythm of the entire framework that took centuries for Greek art to acquire, and at the same time an inner poise and serenity born of the Buddhist imagination. These forecast the medieval sculpture at Ajanta, Ellora and Elephanta. The plastic vision and treatment are the same. No art has shown a more continuous history than the art of India. In the same cave we also have an assemblage of the Buddha and Bodhisattva (Avalokiteśvara) figures of the early Gupta period that migrated, probably in the regime of the Vākāṭakas, across the seas from the port of Amarāvatī and determined the sculpturing of the Buddha type in Indonesia and far-off Cambodia. Thus Indian art shows a unity of development, vitality and continuity embracing the art motifs and techiniques of vast regions in Asia.

4. Standing Buddha from Mathura, now in the National Museum, New Delhi. Gupta Sculpture. 5th Century A.D.

Centuries passed before the Buddha could be given a well-defined plastic form. A few more centuries were taken before the image of the Bodhisattva was patternised. It is generally agreed

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that the first images of the Buddha were sculptured in the Great Kuṣāṇa regime at Mathurā on the basis of such indigenous forms as the well-known Yaksha statue at Parkham in the district of Mathurā. From the inscribed Buddha images during the reign of the Kuṣāṇa king Huviṣka (30 to 61 A.D.) under whose sovereignty the art of Mathurā appears to have greatly flourished and the Friar Bala Bodhisattva, dated 81 A.D., to the Gupta Bodhisattvas of the 5th century Buddhist art has had a history of more than five centuries of evolution at Mathurā. The stylistic handling of the face, pose and robe in the sculptures gradually changed towards a new and indigenous pattern superseding the foreign Romano-Hellenistic features of the earlier Kuṣāṇa art. As a matter of fact Mathurā sculptures of the early centuries B.C., based entirely on indigenous folk traditions and representing Ṛṣis and hermitage scenes, show a development from which it can be definitely concluded that the Kuṣāṇa art of Mathurā was an interlude. The latter inevitably gave way in the later centuries to the vigorous native art that assimilated all that is best in the Greco-Roman motifs and techniques and found its culmination in Gupta sculpture.

No doubt the upsurge of devotion in Bhagavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism profoundly influenced the making of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva images through the assimilation of Hellenistic, Iranian and indigenous folk traditions of figuration—a veritable confluence of cultures shaping Indian art. There is a subtle difference in the Gupta figuring of the Buddha and of the Bodhisattva. The former is more serene, immaculate and impersonal, having obtained the placidity of Nirvāṇa so beautifully rendered by the poise and stability of the seated, yogic, meditative pose. The latter is youthful, radiant with compassion and goodwill for all, and figured in the standing or relaxed seated posture. The Bodhisattva's face is less stern and other-worldly than that of the Mahāśramaṇa and the humanism is often brought into relief by his locks and robe and by the gesture of his arms and hands. The lofty Mathurā figure of the Bodhisattva is one of the most significant symbols of Man's moral and intellectual glory. The massiveness and simplicity of design are heightened by the skilful treatment of the diaphanous robe producing an impression of ethereality and heavenliness, while the severe verticalism of the standing posture that stresses the Bodhisattva's serenity and un-

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bending fidelity is softened by the rounded folds of the robe, by the immense richly ornamented nimbus, and above all by the delicate and refined expression of the highly sensitive hands and fingers, eloquent of the message from the supra-sensible world. Behind the half-closed eye-lids is hid profound knowledge of the mystery of the world-process, while the benignant comprehending smile (not discernible in the more celebrated Sarnath image) reconciles the impersonality of Nirvāṇa with the Master's profound pity for the misery of the world. The image is contemporaneous with the birth of Mahāyāna idealism in Ayodhyā and is one of its purest embodiments.

Round the head of the Buddha we find a magnificently decorated lotus nimbus, distinctive of Gupta sculpture that replaces the plain and simple halo of Kuṣāṇa art by the fully blossomed lotus halo (Kālidāsa's padmātapatra chāyāmaṇḍala) for the Buddha, Viṣṇu and Tīrthaṅkara. The lotus motif in Vedic symbolism implies the limitless, unfolding cosmic space whence creation becomes manifest and the space in the heart or creation or manifestation, or again, the firm, manifested earth, seat or support. Buddhism, as is expected, gave a characteristically moral slant to the interpretation of the lotus symbol. "Just as, Brethren, a lotus born in the water, full grown in the water, rises to the surface and is not wetted by the water, even so, Brethren, the Tathāgata, born in the world, surpasses the world, and is unaffected by the world." (Samyutta Nikāya, III, 140). Since the sculpturing of the goddess Śrī Lakṣmī, Gaja Lakṣmī or Padma Śrī seated on the lotus on the surface of cosmic waters from the second century B.C., we come across the lotus flower as an almost universal motif as God's support in various ways, as the halo, as a means of adornment or as the lotus of play, symbolising the universe in God's hand. Most Indian art motifs go back to the ancient Vedic thought and imagination.

5. Sarnath Buddha. Gupta Sculpture. 5th Century A.D.

Gupta sculpture in Northern India (A.D. 320 to 600) represents the classical phase of Indian art, efflorescent in both poise and charm, vigour and fineness and characteristic of a most favoured epoch in human culture. It created the iconography of Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanism and carried to the masses the message of great religious and social movements. At the same time it showed a new sensibility to the beauty of the human body, especially the

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rhythmic quality of the feminine body, and developed artistic norms, conventions and formulae that in their refinement and clear definition governed the art construction of half of Asia for many centuries. Mere canon and formula cannot make an art true and noble. Gupta art superbly combines abstract and symbolic with *formal* values making it a unique contribution to the world history of art. In the Sarnath image, the Great Master is shown in the attitude of preaching his first sermon, the Dharma-cakra-pravartana-sūtra, in the Park of Antelopes. The Dharma-cakra is metaphysically interpreted in Buddhist literature. It is the Word-wheel and the World-wheel. It symbolises the continuity and cessation (or completion) of Life, of everything that has by nature an origin (Vinaya-Piṭaka I, vi, 29), or the Empire of the Cakravartin, the "frictionless" chariot which with its twin 'Word-wheels' conducts the rider to cessation or nirvāṇa (Samyutta Nikāya, I, 33). Thus the Buddha who preaches the Word at Sarnath "sets in motion the Principal Wheel which is the origin and passing away of the factors of existence". (Saddharma Puṇḍarīka, III, 33). The Dharma-cakra as well as the five earliest disciples (together with the woman donor of the image with her child) are appropriately carved on the pedestal of the Buddha image. The composition is most delightful, breathing poise, profundity and sweetness that are stressed by horizontals, triangles and circles. The stable triangular pattern is brought to relief by the over-hanging, elaborately decorated, circular nimbus. The hovering angels deftly integrated into the nimbus produce an atmosphere of ethereality. Nicety and simplicity of composition blend with a serene linear rhythm embodying the complete cessation of desire and perfect clarity. Thus did Gupta art for the first time in human culture invest the human figure with the highest spiritual and moral value.

"Of all the forms that were created the human form was the most perfect", says the Upanishad. The acme of human perfection represented by the self-absorbed Yogī, formulated by the ancient aniconic Vedic literature and tradition, received its first plastic expression in the sculpture of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva. The world history of art owes to India the perfect plastic interpretation of man's self-absorption—a norm, a symbol and an art pattern which has fecundated the imagination and culture of the entire Middle and South-east Asia.

Sarnath has been famous since the Buddha's first preaching in

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the development of Indian religion and art, and as one of the holiest centres of Buddhist pilgrimage. In the 3rd century B.C. Aśoka built here the Dharmarājika stūpa and erected a magnificent sand stone column with the lion capital crowning the column to commemorate the sacred event of the Buddha's first turning of the Wheel of the Law. The lion capital is now the emblem of the Government of India. Eight centuries later Hiuen Tsang saw both the Aśokan stūpa and pillar as well as a richly decorated temple with a metal image of the Buddha turning the Wheel of the Law. In the 11th. century Sarnath was still known by the name of Saddharma-cakra. But by this time the schisms in Buddhism, against which Aśoka warned the fraternity in his famous edict engraved on the Sarnath pillar, rent asunder the simple creed of the Tathāgata; and not merely Mahāyāna deities such as Avalokiteśvara, Lokanātha, Mañjuśrī and Maitreya but also Vajrayāna gods and goddesses such as Marīci, Nīlakaṇṭha, Vairocana and the various Tārās and Mahāvidyās were installed and worshipped at Sarnath by the side of Gautama the Buddha. A whole host of Brahmanical sculptures including the images of the Hindu Triad, and Sūrya, Śiva and Pārvatī also indicate the religious toleration of the times. No city is more ancient and sacred in India's religious history than eternal Vārāṇasī, lying between the rivers Varaṇā and Asī, the cradle of many orthodox and heterodox cults and philosophical movements since the time of the Buddha, one of the Jātakas describing it as the principal city in the whole country. The basis of India's catholicity and syncretism is the metaphysical conviction, common among all faiths and creeds, in the Real and Universal Man as the crown of all moral and religious endeavour.

6. Vishnu-Anantasayin from the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, Jhansi. Gupta Sculpture. 5th Century A.D.

Gupta sculpture defined the iconographic canons and formulae of Indian art, whether Brahmanical, Buddhist or Jain. Gupta Brahmanical sculpture, with its newly acquired certitude in respect of iconic conventions and mastery of artistic forms, handled cosmogenic and metaphysical myths with great vigour and simplicity presenting a sharp contrast with the human, albeit supra-sensible, images of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Into the art-work were also imported the serenity, humanism and universality of

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Bhagavatism giving it an accent of idealistic poise and balance. In this particular sculpture we have the representation of the Supreme God, Viṣṇu, sleeping on the mythical cosmic serpent Ananta that symbolises Eternity with worshipful gods and men above and below. While God is asleep on the cosmic ocean of milk during the night, Brahmā, all gods, demi-gods and men, are in deep prayer invoking Him to wake up for the maintenance of the order of the cosmos. The sculpture embodies the Brahmanical metaphysical myth of the silence of Being before creation or the withdrawal of the cosmic self into meditation. The fixity of meditation is underlined by the severe horizontality of the reclining image and the repetition of the cosmic serpent's coils and hoods. Viṣṇu's additional hands are most skilfully disposed. The heaviness of his elaborately carved mukuṭa and the utmost generalisation of his limbs stress the poised cosmic slumber. The gods above comprise from left to right Kārtikeya, Indra, Brahmā, Śiva-Pārvatī and Yama. Lakṣmī is massaging the God's feet. Standing immediately behind her is her attendant (Vasumatī?), while to her left is Garuḍa with a serpent coiled round his neck. In the panel below are the five Pāṇḍavas — Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva and their wife Draupadī from left to right. It is round the devotions of the Pañca Pāṇḍavas that the Indian epic weaves the magic texture of Bhagavatism in Gupta India. The entire ensemble of sculptures breathes profound serenity and absorption that overflow from the self-absorbed deity. Each face, aided by the headgear and wrapping as well as the flow of the apparel, consolidates the specific degree and quality of contemplation. The gods above show a characteristic blend of cosmic activity (divya-kriyā) with detachment. The mysterious brooding silence of the triple-headed Brahmā and the dignity and majesty of Śiva and Umā seated on the running bull in the sky are in striking contrast with the tense devotion of Garuḍa, the easy relaxed mood of Lakṣmī who knows her Lord and the tender, supplicating devotion of Draupadī with her hand outstretched in prayer. The princes below show distinctly human worshipful attitudes with relaxed limbs and mouths except Arjuna and Bhīma. The valiant Arjuna wields vigorously his sword (instead of his favourite gāṇḍīva bow) combining his spiritual tranquility with armed struggle without anger and hatred for lokasaṅgraha or maintenance of the world order—the yoga of Karma of the Bhagavad Gītā taught by

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Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva. Rarely does a big sculpture with numerous images achieve such a total effect of poised silence, a cosmic rather than individual emotion, shown as a state of existence whence the universe and all living beings and their ways spring, as from the world-lotus stemming from the God's navel. This is an unmistakable proof of the maturity of Gupta classical structure.

7. The Duality of the Supreme Brahman or Nara-Narayana from Deogarh. Gupta Sculpture.

Here are represented in stone the dual forms of the Supreme Brahman, One-in-Two, revealing the essential metaphysical doctrine of the Bhagavad-Gītā, the identity of the immediate, fragmentry self and the eternal Being (Nara-Nārāyaṇa or Kṣara-Akṣara). The four-handed image is Nārāyaṇa or Puruṣottama (Caturbhuja), while the other is Antaryāmī or immanent Īśa of the Gītā. The two aspects of the Brahman or Self are imaged in the attitude of ratiocination. By the power of Yoga Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva also creates his own double or multiple. The Mahābhārata identifies Nara and Nārāyaṇa with Kṛṣna and Arjuna Pāṇdava, and refers to the discourse between them and Nārada. Nara-Nārāyaṇa is also sometimes applied to Kṛṣṇa alone. Nara is one of the thousand names of Viṣṇu, and Kṛṣṇa's friend Arjuna is regarded as an incarnation of Nara. Metaphysically, the Mahābhārata identifies Nara and Nārāyaṇa with the dual forms of the Supreme Brahman. "That which is eternal, immutable, supreme, is pleased to assume, choosing to be displayed, this one blessed form (for though double the two represent the one and the same form). This Nara and Nārāyaṇa (the displayed forms of Supreme Brahman) have taken birth in the race of dharma. The foremost of all deities, these two are observers of the highest vows and endowed with the severest penances". (Śāntiparva 342, 124-129). Seldom does art so eloquently represent a metaphysical truth—the reconciliation of the Bhāgavata notions of transcendance and immanence. It is rare that in sculpture intervening empty spaces (as between the two Selves—the mutable and the immutable and between their large limbs) as well as parallels and horizontals are so effectively utilised for an emphasis of poise and fulfilment. The two ascetic figures carved with melting softness and largeness, suitable for the luxuriant modelling of nudes, appear as everlasting exponents of the mood of perfect self-absorption and help each other both

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artistically and psychologically in the consolidation of that mood. They both breathe purity, prajñānaṃ (wisdom) and śāntaṃ (tranquility) recorded by a combination of restraint and amplitude in modelling and the large expansive rhythm of the ensemble. On the top the brisk movement of the flying angles is in sharp contrast with the serenity of the scene of contemplation on the earth. Gods of heaven—Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva—angels of the upper air and animals of the earth offer homage to the secret of Man's wisdom and bliss, that indeed constitute his Divinity and that impose the moral law on the denizens of Heaven and Earth. The epic adds that the adoration of these dual forms of the Supreme Brahman brings peace unto all the worlds without delay. The sculpture consolidates the mood of universal peace in creation.

8. The Boar-Incarnation of God, from Udayagiri near Vidisa. Gupta Culture. 5th Century A.D.

One of the grandest representations of a cosmical myth—the creation of Earth, who is rescued from the submerging oceans by the Boar-God manifestation of Viṣṇu. The colossal rock-cut-relief, simple, massive and monumental, overreaches the size of the wall thronged with gods, men, saints and demons. The diagonal movement of the omnipotent, colossal Boar-God is stressed by the horizontality of the wall and roof, the unending layers of living creatures and the serried waves of the rivers Gaṅgā and Yamunā mingling with the sea and carried over at right angles across the recess wall (where Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Varuṇa are represented). This fully conveys the triumphant intercession of Cosmic Power (Divyakriyā) in the myth of creation. The surrounding lotus decorative motifs, the flowing Vaijayantī garland as well as the loin cloth with its three folds hanging down vertically serve to balance the composition as Viṣṇu by the sheer weight of his ponderous body lifts up Earth that resigns herself to this fateful movement and, as she rises, delicately places her feet on a lotus bud. Nāgarāja, king of the underworld, worships the Boar-God from below in consternation. On the plane of history this magnificent image records Emperor Samudra Gupta's rescue of India from chaos and confusion as the images of Gaṅgā and Yamunā standing on the alligator (makara) and tortoise (kacchapa) respectively indicate his conquest of Middle India. For the first time in the history of Indian sculpture the oft-repeated motifs of Gaṅgā and

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Yamunā appear here associated with the Brahmanical renaissance under the Imperial Guptas. There may be even a more direct reference to Candra Gupta, (if we accept the evidence of Viśākhadatta's Devīcandraguptaṃ and the commentary of Śaṅkara) rescuing Dhruvadevī or Dhruvasvāminī, later on his chief consort, who was cowardly offered by her imbecile husband to the Śaka invader (Rudra Siṃha?) in exchange of peace in the realm.

9. Bodhisattvas from the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas at Tun-huang, China. 5th Century A.D.

These belong to the period of the Wei dynasty of China under whom Buddhism became the state religion of North China and stupendous Buddhist caves, chapels and halls were carved out of the mountains as in India. The influence of the Classical Gupta art of India is clearly discernible in the images of the series of venerable Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The figures are super-natural and idealised as at Mathurā, Sārnāth and Nagarahāra and show the same sensitive treatment, especially in the folds of the robe along with skill in the disposition of light and darkness in the caves. The attendant divinities as well as human devotees in the smaller niches are also handled with the same Boticellian sweetness and delicacy of feeling. Tun-huang or Sa-chu in western Kan-su on the southern route to China became the centre of a Buddhist university that influenced the culture of Middle Asia and China from the 3rd to the 10th century A.D. It was in fact an intermediate station in the continuous movement of the Buddhist monk-scholars to China. In one of its monasteries Dharmarakṣa, the great Buddhist translator, worked during the later half of the 3rd century A.D. A considerable number of frescoes and paintings of silk-banners were also discovered here showing vividly the intermingling of Indian Gupta and later Chinese Tang influences in the superb treatment in golds, blues and reds of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Mahāyāna Paradises. From Tun-huang Indian artistic influences travelled to Tibet, especially after the establishment of the Tibetan Empire in the 9th century that included the western Chinese border. Proto-types of Tibetan paintings are to be found at Tun-huang which became for several centuries the centre of learning and pilgrimage of the entire Middle Asian Buddhist world. From the holy land of Magadha to Kan-su in China we find a similarity of art and thought, shaped by the ideal

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of Mahāyāna Buddhism and the dream of the Asaṅgas, Kumārajīvas and Huien Tsangs that linked Indian with Central Asian and Chinese culture.

10. Avalokitesvara Padmapani from Ajanta. Classical Gupta painting. 6th-7th Century A.D.

Ajanta is only four miles from the principal southern trade-route from Northern India via Ujjain and Māhiṣmatī to Pratiṣṭhāna and Amarāvatī, and is situated on the mouth of one of the streams that descend from the Vindhyas to the table-land of the Deccan. Here Sātavāhana influences from Sāñcī and Amarāvatī and Gupta influences from Sarnath, Mathurā and Ujjain converged. So also converged the qualities of earthliness and sensuousness of Alakā in the poetry of Aśvaghoṣa and Kālidāsa and the asceticism and mystical wonder of the Lalitavistara, the Buddhacarita and the Jātakamālā. Ajantan frescoes epitomize and symbolise the balance between the worldly and the spiritual, between Saṁsāra and Nirvāṇa, characteristic of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The Mahāyāna myth and morality, dominant for a whole millennium, are superbly expressed and consolidated here—the unity and solidarity of all existence in a cosmic scheme of action and inter-action of karma through the successive births and re-births of the Bodhisattva, who takes the vow that he shall not enter into Nirvāṇa before the creatures of the world are liberated. Suddenly the Buddhist world is illumined with a surging wave of delight. It is the magic apparition of the Mahāyāna Gods of Compassion, Padmapāṇi, Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya and Mañjuśrī who obtain veneration and activate universal charity throughout the Asian world. It is to these Bodhisattvas that the ardent hymns of the contemporary poet mystic Śāntideva of Valabhī are addressed. The Mahāyāna myth at Ajanta has created its own set of formal values that are contributions of India to the world history of painting: decisive and vigorous but subtle and delicate lines; a plastic sense in figuration underlined by the interplay of lights and shades; a sense of movement along with roundness and relief communicated by the repetition of figures with their swaying limbs in a crowd or procession in somewhat Cezannean landscapes; a simple but consummate colour scheme; and a smooth dynamic rhythm of composition on a grand scale unrestricted by any rigid demarcation of frames.

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Accidentally discovered by some officers of the Madras army carousing in the forest in 1819, Ajanta has now become the place of pilgrimage of art-lovers from different parts of the world, and its frescoes which represent perhaps the greatest artistic wonder of Asia have been reproduced almost completely since the first copies of Major Gill (1866) and Griffiths (1872) were unfortunately destroyed. It was the enchanting sequestered glen above the Waghora river, leaping down the mountain rocks in a series of cascades, rich with beauteous species of animal life and offering retreat for shelter and meditation of generations of Buddhist monks during the rains that inspired some of the noblest sculptures and paintings ever executed by man. Ajanta was the venerated parent school for the Buddhist art of Middle Asia, Tibet, China, Japan and South-eastern Asia for succeeding centuries.

11. Scene from the Lankavatara-Sutra in a Chinese Painting.

The faith and promise of Mahāyāna Buddhism, as it crossed over into Middle Asia and China, was "Buddhas ye shall become", that all sentient beings, "as numerous as the sands of the Ganges" shall become Buddhas. The painting from the Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra, one of the most brilliant of the Mahāyāna texts which was first translated into Chinese in 420 A.D., embodies the conception of the Tathāgata which expresses itself in the enlightenment and salvation of all. The multiplicity of figuring of the Buddha with two attending Bodhisattvas records at once the metaphysical conception of Universal Nirvāṇa and the tenderly lyrical devotion of the masses.

12. Lokesvara Padmapani from Lalitagiri, Orissa. Utkala Classical School. Early 8th Century A.D.

This is a Buddhist Mahāyāna sculpture showing a rare and happy combination of abstraction with warmth of feeling, of formalism with luxuriance and of impersonalism with delicacy and charm. The broad shoulders, the sleek, arched waist and the sinuous flow of ornaments and garlands stress a bodily charm that is born of the illumination of the spirit, while the serene yet compassionate face blends omniscience with sympathy for world misery. The entire composition is dominated by the flowing rhythm of the lotus stalk. The parallels constituted by the arms of Sītā and

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Śyāmā Tārās on two sides, the lotus stalk and the legs, and the flowing garland of the Bodhisattva and underlined by the horizontal repetitive flames of the Prabhāmaṇḍala stress the perfect silence and clarity of the Bodhisattva. The plastic rhythm of the jewellery sets off the largeness and purity of the model. This image should be compared with that of Bodhisattva Padmapāṇī at Sarnath of the fifth century A.D. and the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara at Nalanda of the early 8th century. The Utkala figure though lacking the unfathomable profundity of the former images certainly shows a superior innate coherence and linear rhythm of plastic treatment. Yet the suppleness of the curves is on the whole subordinated to the plasticity of the mass. The radiance of the youthful figure and the decorative pattern, not too elaborate, incarnate the Mahāyāna metaphysical myth of identification of Saṁsāra and Nirvāṇa, the life of the senses and the life of contemplation.

13. Seated Buddha from Java. Late 8th Century A.D.

A superb Javanese sculpture in grand style. Its clarity and severity are reminiscent of the finest Gupta statues. The baldness and massiveness of the design are heightened by the decorative treatment of the monk's matted locks. Profound poise is embodied and consolidated not only in the unfathomable, brooding silence of the face eloquent of the message of Nirvāṇa but also in the stable triangular pattern of the whole composition, whose monumentality is added by the massive Prabhāmaṇḍala actually fringed by flames. Colonial art perfectly reproduced in Dvīpāntara Bhārata the homeland's attribution of the highest moral grandeur to the human figures. The Buddhist Pāla art of Bengal profoundly influenced the art of Java in the 9th and succeeding centuries. This image has a striking affinity with many seated Buddha statues of the Eastern Indian School at the time of Devapāla who extended the Pāla Empire from Kanauj to Kaliṅga. In the second Pāla empire, established by Mahīpāla, peace and prosperity led to a fresh artistic revival which produced some of the best images in both stone and copper in Eastern India. Tārānāth records that two great artists, Dhīmān and Bitpalo, who lived in Varendra (North Bengal) or Nalendra (Nalanda) during the reigns of Dharmapāla and Devapāla "produced sculptures and paintings as well as works in cast metal, which resembled the works of the Nāgas". Metal

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images of the Bodhisattva and Tārā, Śiva and Durgā of rare artistic excellence were produced in Bengal under the Pāla and Sena Empires and influenced the metal-casting of Nepal, Tibet, Java, Siam, Annam and Cambodia. It is noteworthy that while the classical Gupta art of the schools of Mathurā, Sārnāth, Pāṭaliputra and Ajantā influenced the motifs and procedures of the various art regions of India it is these local regions such as Gandhāra, Amarāvatī, Kāñcī, Badami, Varendra, Kaliṅga and Khajurāho which contributed materially to disseminate the traditions of Indian art in Middle and South-eastern Asia.

14. Indian Art Motif in South-East Asia. Late 9th Century A.D.

The colonial art of India cannot be understood without a proper appreciation of the various art motifs and symbols and the philosophy of life behind them that comprise the alphabet of Indian art and literature. The lotus motifs in the Viṣṇu, Śiva, Bodhisattva, and Śakti images are classical Indian. The flying or quivering flame motifs is definitely Buddhist-Tāntrika of the Pāla period, symbolising the Śakti or power of gods and goddesses. The latter in its varied stylised forms is found very frequently in decorations in Burma, Java, Bali, Siam and Cambodia. The lotus and the flying flame however, often superbly blend with each other in Indian colonial art as in the figuration of the dancing Apsara from Bayon, Cambodia. She dances on the blossoming lotus foliage, while the quivering flame constitutes the frame of the modelling. Other common and dominant colonial art motifs derived from India include the full vase, the tree of life, the wish-fulfilling creeper, the wheel of revolution, the svastika, the supernal sun, the serpent of Eternity, the Garuḍa and the Kīrtimukha.

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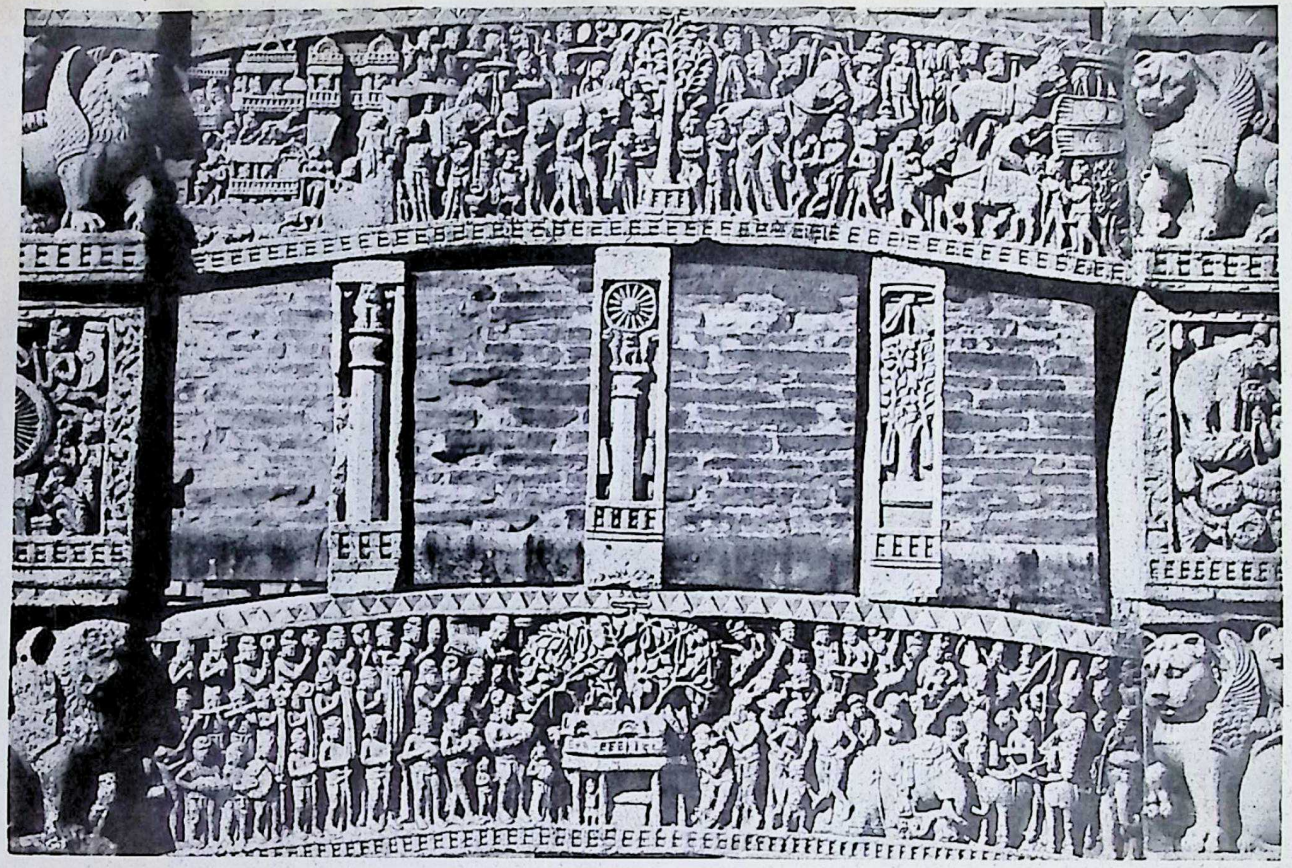

1. Reliefs from the Gateway at Sanchi. Second-first Century B.C.

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2. Yakshi or Apsara (Tree-nymph-cum-Erotic Woman) from Mathura. 2nd Century A.D.

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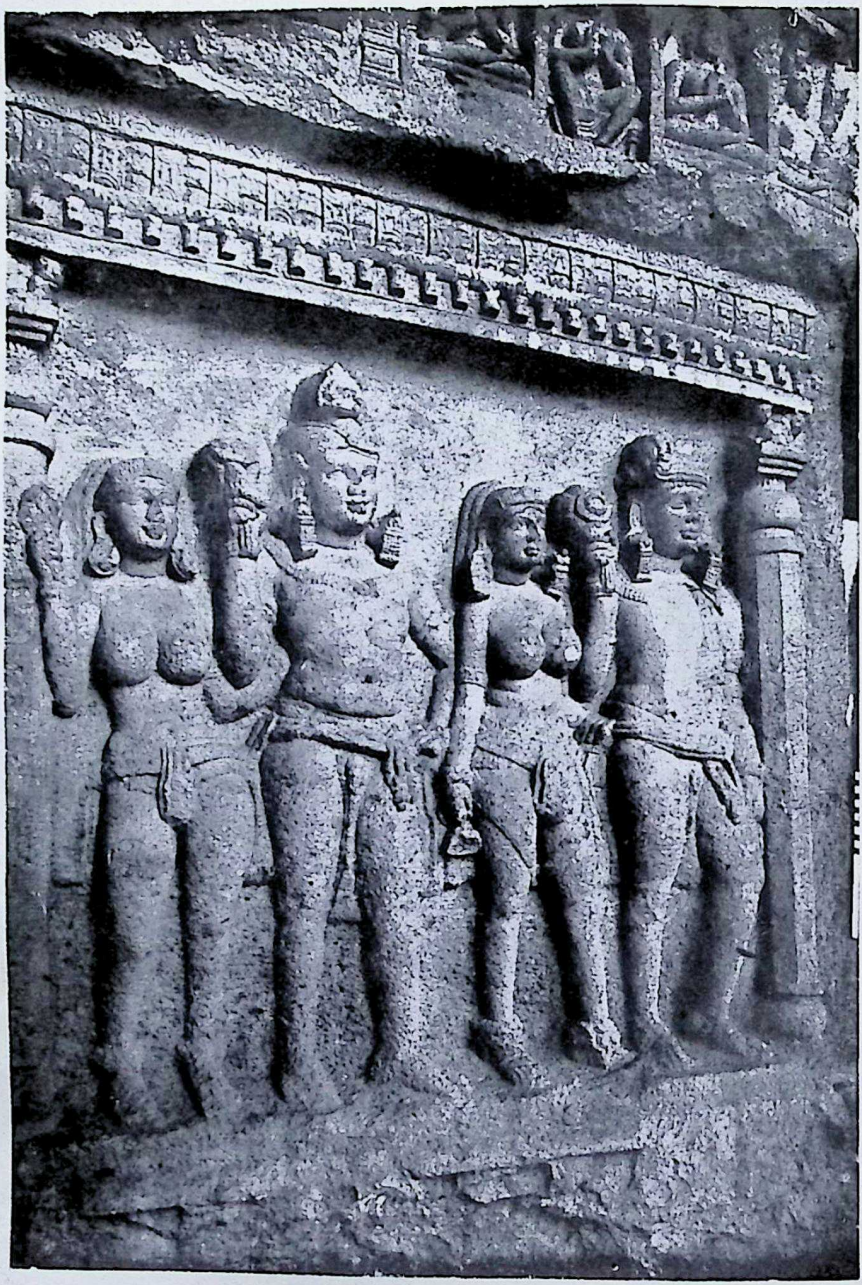

3. Figures of Donors from Kanheri. 2nd Century A.D.

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4. Standing Buddha from Mathura, now in the National Museum, New Delhi. 5th Century.

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5. Sarnath Buddha. Gupta Sculpture. 5th Century.

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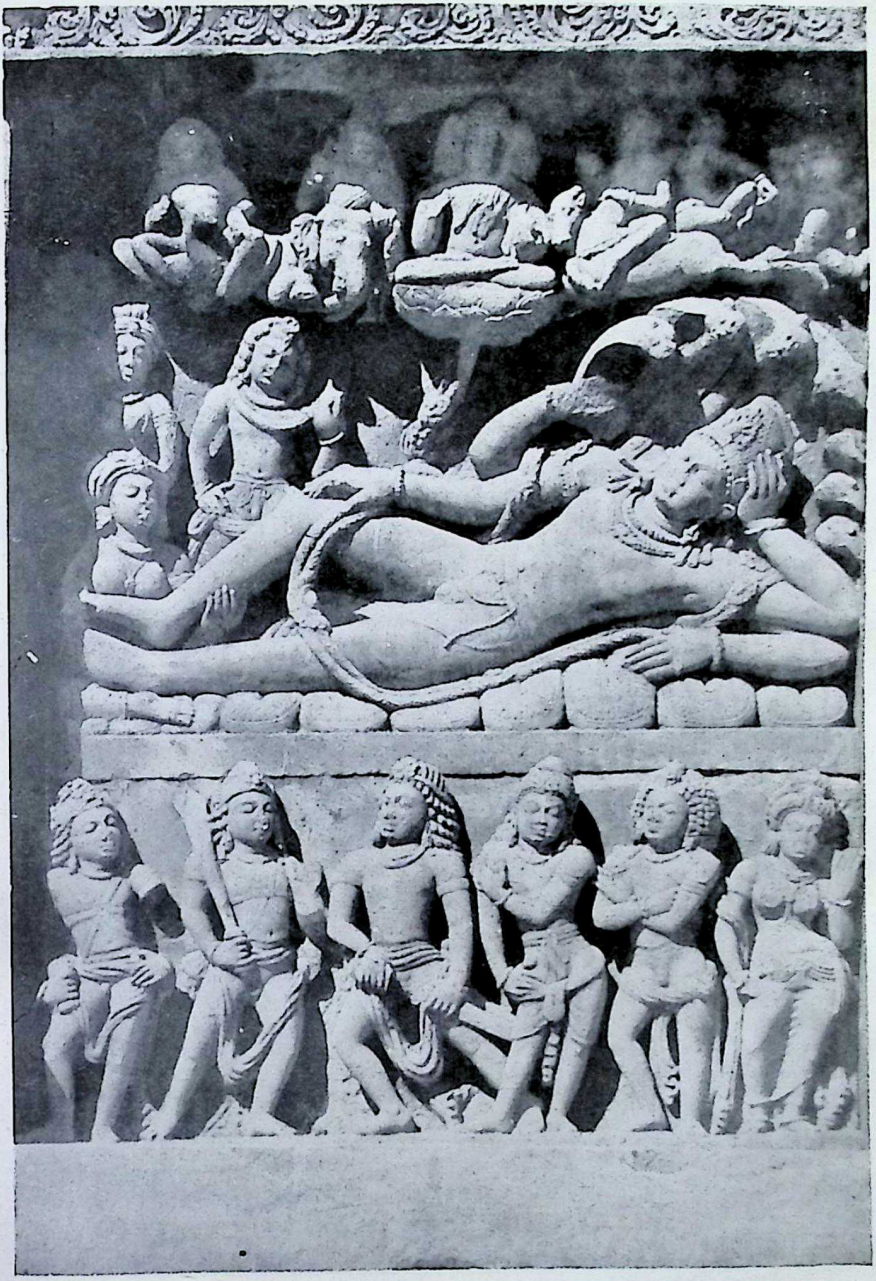

6. Vishnu-Anantasayin from the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh, Jhansi. 5th Century.

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7. The Duality of the Supreme Brahman or Nara-Narayana from Deogarh. 5th Century.

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8. **The Boar-Incarnation of God, Udayagiri near Bidisa. 5th Century.**

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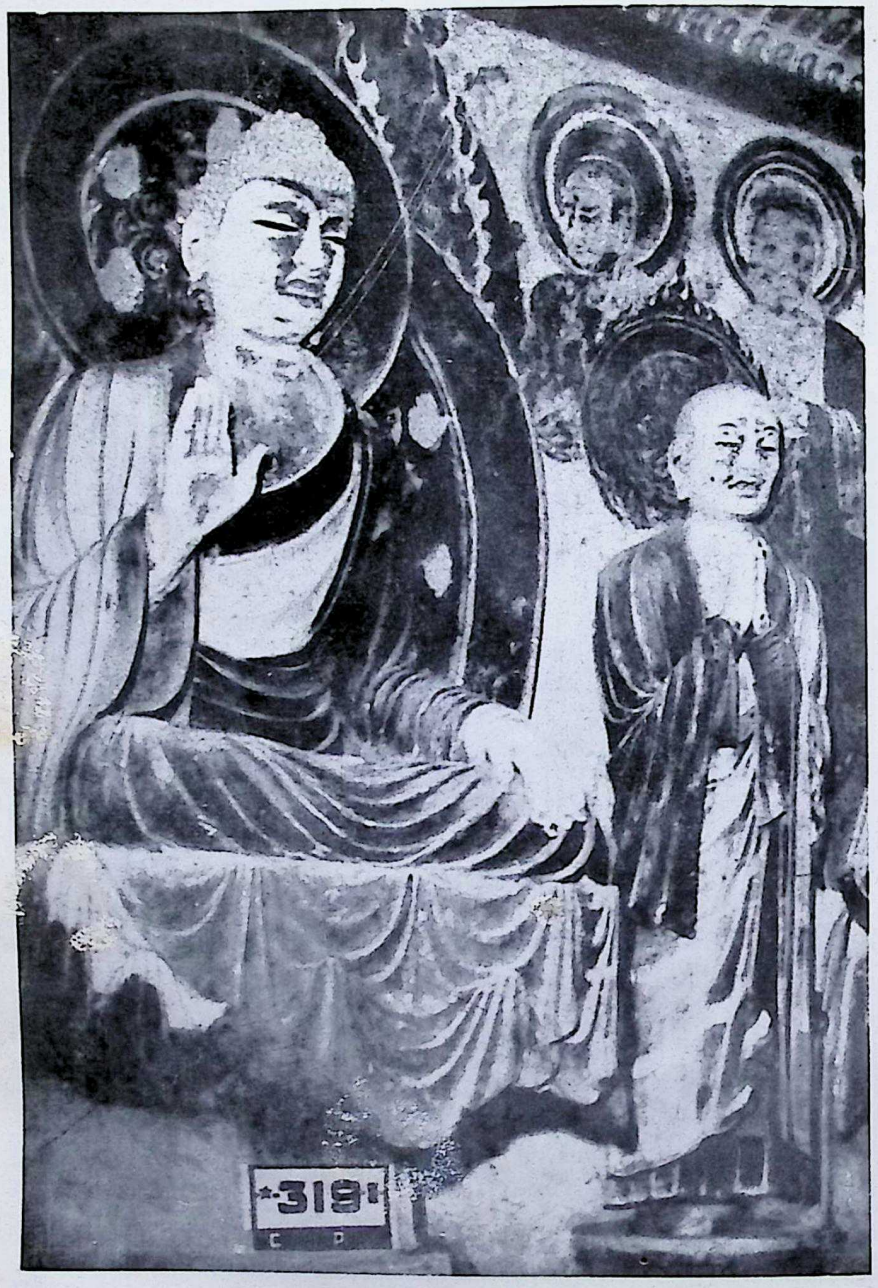

9. Bodhisattvas from the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas at Tun-huang, China. 5th Century.

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10. Avalokitesvara Padmapani from Ajanta. 6th to 7th Century.

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11. Scene from the Lankavatara-Sutra in a Chinese Painting.

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12. Lokesvara Padmapani from Lalitagiri, Orissa. Early 8th Century.

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13. Seated Buddha from Java. Late 8th Century.

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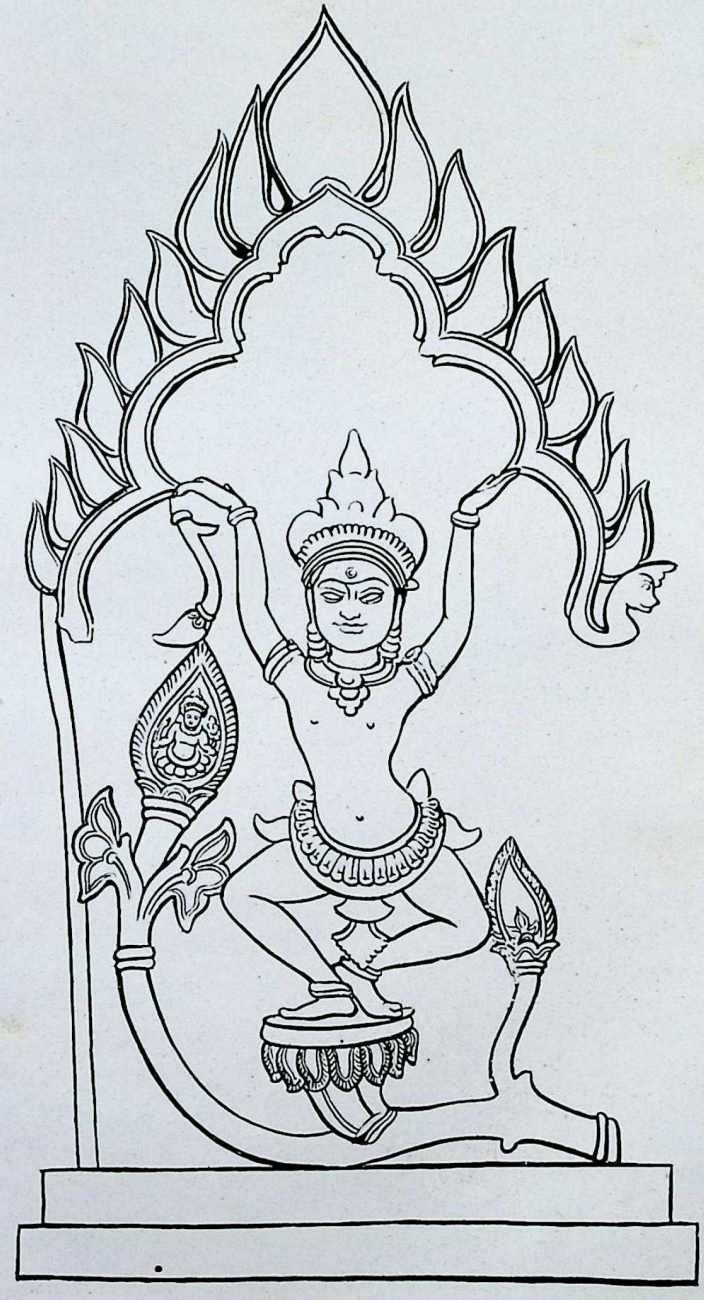

14. Indian Art Motif in South-East Asia.

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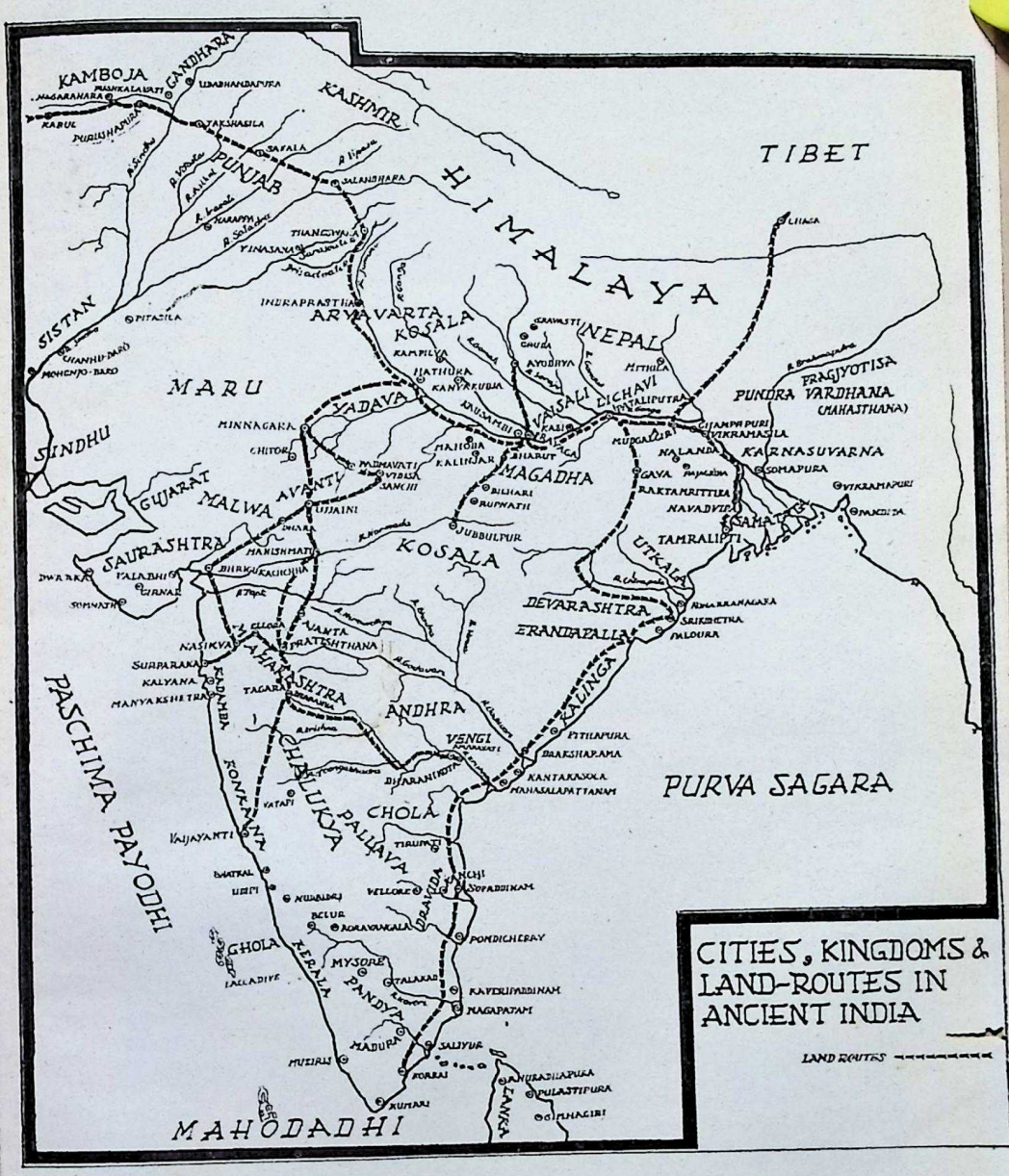

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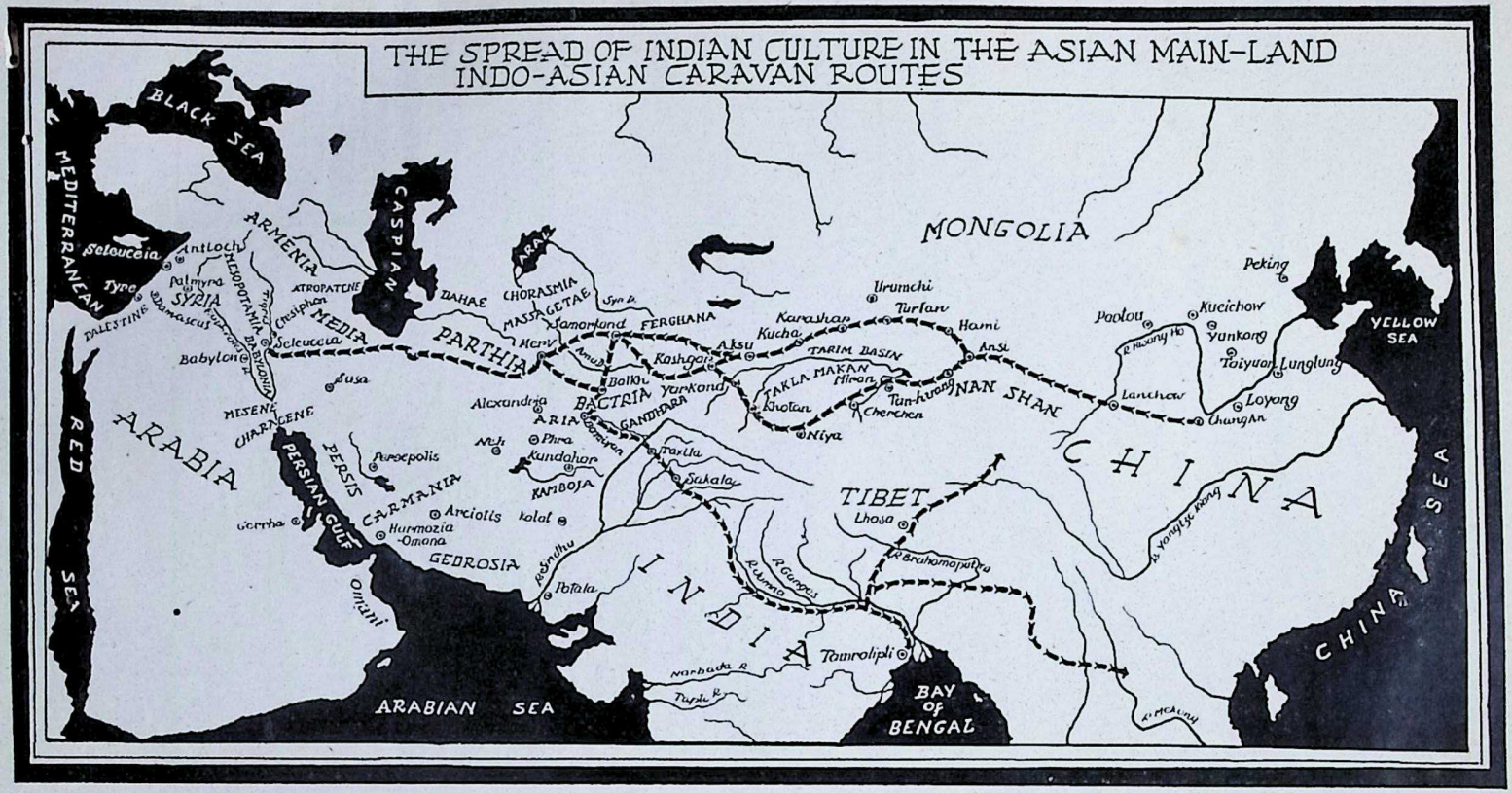

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